


PERSONS AND PLACES
BY
JOEL BENTON



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PERSONS AND PLACES

OTHER BOOKS
by JOEL BENTON

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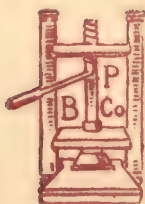


FROM THE ORIGINAL IN POSSESSION OF THEODORE PARKER, AND
CONSIDERED THE MOST CHARMING PICTURE
OF EMERSON.

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P E R S O N S
AND
P L A C E S

BY
JOEL BENTON.



*Illustrated from Original Photos
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TO

Mr. A. S. Frissell

FRIEND OF MY EARLY AND LATEST DAYS.

IN MEMORY OF

THE TIME WHEN WE WERE AMONG BOOKS
TOGETHER

I GLADLY INSCRIBE
THIS UNPRETENTIOUS VOLUME.

"All that I have written has been brought to me by a thousand different Persons."—GOETHE.

"All Places that the eye of heaven visits are to a wise man ports and happy havens."—SHAKESPEARE, *Richard II.*

PREFATORY

“**P**ERSONS OR PLACES? Yes, Persons and Places, if you please.”

With this salutation Dr. Hale opens one of his gossipy essays. But (by some hypnotic parallelism of thought, it may have been), the title of this volume was chosen before I saw his introductory words. Its fitness, however, will not be spoiled by this repetition. “Persons,” says Richter, “cannot be proscribed or disposed of.” For, they are among the solidest of realities. And “Places,” he says, “often call upon us to account for ourselves, to see how far we have wandered from a true ideal.” Both these themes, then, bring high obligations.

But, I do not felicitate myself enough to believe that I have done more, in the cursory comment between these covers, than to call attention to a few great subjects. Whether personal, or topographical, they provoke retrospection and mental pause. Another writer might have treated them to better or more fruitful results; but, not with more sym-

pathy, and willingness to serve the reader. I may congratulate myself, at least, that, if this offering be of no great weight, I have had, as an equipment for making it, the privilege of notable associations. As the lump of perfumed clay said, (according to Saadi, the Persian poet) in speaking of itself, so can I say: "I am not the Rose, but I have had the felicity for a time to be with it;" and this will explain to you why it is if I, accidentally, bring to you any trace of the Rose's flavor.

It only remains to be said that, for the use here of five of these essays, I am indebted to Mr. Price's *Booklover*, *The New Age*, *The Bookman*, *The Unitarian Review*, and *The Outlook* (when it was the *Christian Union*).

J. B.

POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y., October, 1905.

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PERSONS AND PLACES

EMERSON: AS I SAW HIM.

AN author, to be well understood, needs always to be considered on two sides—one representing his personality and one his performance. And it is the personal equation that chiefly counts in making the final estimate of him. With Emerson the individual note was hard to describe, as he was ethereally lofty. Perhaps this is best known by the fact that Mr. Frank B. Sanborn, who—apart from the members of Emerson's own family—probably knew him better than any living writer, does not quite complete for us, in his reverent and interesting monograph on Emerson, as full a picture of the man as we should like. But the fault is in the nature of things—not to be helped, and one that cannot be made the subject of blame. My own brief appreciation will add little that is new, except the incident it is built upon, but it interests me to recall the associations here related.

When I met Emerson many years ago, it happened in this way: He was to lecture thirty miles distant from my home, in midwinter, in a provincial city, to which I could not obtain access by rail-

road. But, as I was resolved to see and hear him, I set out with a friend—both of us then young men—to drive thirty miles on wheels over rough winter roads to the required destination. We had both read his books, and were more aroused to listen to his voice and take account of his looks than we should have been to see the President of the United States. It required the loss of a day to make this journey and to hear the lecture, and another day to return home, but they were days to be marked with golden red letters—like those, indeed, in his beautifully symbolic poem of “Days,” which “bring diadems”

“Bread, kingdom, stars, and sky that holds them all.”

A full audience was assembled in the public hall when the lecture hour arrived, and it was typical of all classes. Only a small fraction of it, however, was much acquainted with the lecturer’s work, though few probably were ignorant of his reputation. Some, remembering perhaps the insoluble mystery of his poem entitled “Brahma,” of which the press had already made much sport, might have been enticed to the entertainment to find new enigmas proffered. But, it was said a little girl once selected this poem for school recitation, and gave as a reason that it was the only one of the author’s poems that she could understand. Emerson himself, when told that it was a puzzle to nearly everybody, seemed surprised, and said the difficulty

would vanish if, instead of titling it as it was titled, the reader should title it "Jehovah."

When the lecturer came upon the stage with that illuminated face which was so habitual with him, and the high gentleness of manner which accompanied it, we were all breathlessly silent. His topic was "Manners," which he called the "minor morals." The essence of it only is now to be found, and the reader who cares to see its compressed synopsis will find it in the essay on "Behavior," in "The Conduct of Life" volume. It was Emerson's habit to yield to the public, when he spoke, some diffusion of phrases, as a mediation to their understanding. In other words, to thin his philosophy for the slowness of the ear, and, when he put the lecture later under book covers, to compact it for the quiet and lingering eye.

In this lecture the poetic motto which fronts it, as the essay, was embedded; and a few of the lines, one who has ever seen him will be sure to apply, in part, to their author. These are the ones I mean, the last couplet being eminently descriptive:

"Grace, Beauty and Caprice
Build this golden portal;
Graceful women, chosen men
Dazzle every mortal."

His voice was singularly mellow and modulated—put forth as if the thoughts uttered were just

being born, and not already on paper—and punctuated by studied halts and an emphasis that were themselves helpful and charming. When he closed the poem with the lines that follow, those who had the inner ear to hear felt as if a superior being had somehow hypnotized them. It is of fine manners that they are summoned to speak, and their effect on the observer:

“Their tranquil mien bereaveth him
Of wit, of words, of rest.
Too weak to win, too fond to shun
The tyrants of his doom,
The much deceived Endymion
Slips behind a tomb.”

A friend once told me that he would take a long winter's drive to hear Wendell Phillips repeat a second time—in his lecture on Daniel O'Connell—his recitation of Byron's eloquent poem, beginning with

“The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,”

and I would almost have been willing to make over again my trip to hear Emerson once more repeat his own lines, which I have here partly quoted.

This does not mean that Emerson was as great an orator conventionally as Phillips was. But he was greater intellectually and spiritually, and, in a certain way, unsurpassed by any speaker that any one now living has ever heard. Only those,

however, who were prepared to hear his discourse can admit this.

But there were various and bewildering comments upon the lecture when the audience walked out, in spite of the rapt and silent attention that had been given to it. With many there seemed to be a sense of something that had been shot over their heads, and had hit a mark they could not or did not see. I should have said his manuscript was a mass of loose leaves, like a pack of cards, and apparently they sometimes got intermixed, causing an occasional momentary pause to look the right one up. But it used to be said that even this added a thrill to the lecture—perhaps because you could linger a little yourself, during the silence, to ponder upon what had just been spoken. Some said it really made no difference if he picked up the wrong leaf, or shuffled them as if they actually were a pack of cards. As the continuity of thought was a spiritual one, rather than one of syntax or of logic, the brilliant intuitions went on equally well in any order.

But when the audience had vanished, my friend and I, who had taken more than ordinary time and exertion to hear the lecturer, were cordially invited by him to an hour's interview in his room at the hotel. And no hour that I can recall was ever made more gracious or memorable. It was trying at the outset, for we knew the mind that saw in microcosm more than mere traits and appearances,

and could inexorably combine them. Still he had immeasurable hospitality for that which aspired, though it were mottled with defects. "Not failure," as Lowell said, "but low aim is crime." And not where you begin, but whither your pinnacle is pointed was the basis for Emerson's estimate of persons. He spoke of Burke and Webster, of Edward Everett and others to us—in his usual analytic way, in words that were jewels in clarity, meaning and expression. An urbanity of manner unsurpassed seemed to be his habitual endowment, reminding me of what he had said in the hall, that "Consuelo boasts that she had given on the stage lessons in manners to the nobles, and that Talma taught Napoleon the arts of behavior."

What Mr. Woodbury says of Emerson is worth quoting. He remarks that "there was nothing pronounced about him. Presence (in our meaning) he had none, because without the consciousness, self-esteem and self-assertion which go so far to constitute it. But there was that behind the withdrawn manner which took possession with an exclusiveness no personal fascination or magnetism could equal or explain. To every comer he was a fact, and experience, undissuadable, penetrating to the region of motion and source of volition; and from the first moment his was the morning light which shines more and more unto the perfect day."

His look itself was interrogative. Before all

persons and topics he presented the inquiring attitude. He did not dominate the conversation, but was eager to listen to even the small things we were able to offer. I asked before leaving for his autograph; and he wrote for me the following couplet, before it had been printed, giving to my friend at the same time another:

"A score of airy miles will smooth
Rough Monadnoc to a gem."

Not to be forgotten, considering this was his last hour of a wearisome day, is the benignant look he gave us when we arose to go. It did not say that we had been "devastators of the day," or of the hour, and his warm hand-shake and good-by came like a benediction.

SOME OF THOREAU'S PECULIARITIES.

Wachusset, who like me
Standeth alone without society,
Upholding heaven, holding down earth,—
Thy pastime from thy birth;—
Not steadied by the one, nor leaning on the other,
May I approve myself thy worthy brother!

—THOREAU

ALTHOUGH I never saw Henry D. Thoreau, I have been a diligent student of his writings, and have had the benefit of hearing, on various occasions, many verbal accounts of him. A friend of mine, who heard him lecture in Portland before he wrote "Walden," or was much known beyond Concord, said his general appearance and manner were droll. He was far from being eloquent or popular as a speaker, but nothing could be more interesting to a thoughtful man than his lectures. In this early lecture Thoreau remarked, among other things: "I like the Greek language, because it sounds like the ocean." But few people could understand him socially. By very many worthy people, some of whom were men of note, his ways were not to be borne. Like Diog-



Henry D. Thoreau.

1817-1862.

enes, he thought more of the sunshine than of Alexander. He was a Diogenes holding up his lantern to find a sincere man; and he somehow managed, at once, to let the lantern flash in each newcomer's face, whatsoever judgment it provoked. If even Emerson was sometimes annoyed by the perverseness of his friend, it was not so strange that a number of eminent persons were stung to anger and resentment by an attitude that to them carried no explanation.

As a result of this lack of mordancy in the social chemistry which touched Thoreau, we have a good deal of criticism of his books based largely upon a vivid remembrance of contact with the man. Mr. Sanborn is one of the few who can rise above this remembrance; but one seems to see it influence Mr. Lowell not a little, and the Hawthornes a good deal. Just what it was that made Thoreau agreeable to some it might be hard to tell; but when a person pleased him, I believe the happy impression was mutual. I imagine where this pleasure was not evoked, the reciprocity of dislike was also mutual. Each situation was representable by the two terms of a mathematical equation. I ought to remember here, before this paragraph ends, that the elder Hawthorne was helpful to Thoreau in his business of lecturing, and brought him to Salem to address its Lyceum—probably more than once.

I have said that I never met Thoreau myself, and perhaps that is the reason why I have read

all he has written with a delight which is to be qualified by but few reservations. Mr. Julian Hawthorne knew him, and has coolly stamped him as "the most dismal fraud of the New England transcendental group." It seems curious, if this is the case, if he was really a "golden calf," assuming to be a god, that his work seems to affect the most acute foreign critics with such high favor, and to stand, so far as they have yet had a chance, the hard test of time. Or, is it true that the younger Mr. Hawthorne is right, and that Mr. Emerson, and so many other competent critics, in more than one country, are mistaken?—so mistaken that posterity will be puzzled to account for them. I have heard it said by one who—as a boy—carried a surveyor's chain for him over a large part of Concord, that he was fond of talking, and was eminently sociable with those who had tolerance, and something to communicate. To approach him with patronage, though, and as a study—as if he belonged to some new species—was probably the precise recipe for disastrous misapprehension.

He was fond of pets—especially kittens—and could delight children. Mr. Sanborn says he "was sometimes given to music and song, and now and then, in moments of great hilarity, would dance gaily." This biographer adds: "A strange mistake has prevailed as to the supposed churlishness and cynical severity of Thoreau which Mr. Alcott in one of his octogenarian sonnets has corrected,

and which all who knew the man would protest against."

But these are Alcott's lines of truthful defense:

"Much do they wrong our Henry wise and kind,
 Morose who name thee, cynical to men.
 Forsaking manners civil and refined
 To build thyself in Walden woods a den,—
 Then flout society, flatter the rude hind.
 We better knew thee, loyal citizen!
 Thou, friendship's all-adventuring pioneer,
 Civility itself would civilize.
 While braggart boors, wavering 'twixt rage and fear,
 Slave hearths lay waste, and Indian huts surprise,
 And swift the Martyr's gibbet would uprear:
 Thou hail'dst him great whose valorous emprise,
 Orion's blazing belt dimmed in the sky,—
 Then bowed thy unrepining head to die."

I suspect Thoreau was as busy with his leisure and as careful of it, as of his working hours. Doubtless, he, too, as well as Emerson, was too much interviewed by bores and curiosity seekers, who flocked in upon him at inopportune hours, and treated time as if it had no limit.

I am not purposing to make a defense or estimate of Thoreau, so far as he concerns the world. As Diogenes was not amiable always, even to Plato, so this modern critic and observer must have lacked the faculty—from what we hear—of pleasing most people in his mode of personal intercourse. But I feel certain that his books have as good a ticket to immortality as any writing that can be

named which is going forth in this current decade. One cannot know, to be sure, what will be read a thousand years hence, but one may have the privilege of guessing.

What I set out to write, however, was something different from a speculation like this. Thoreau, himself, tells us why he chose his peculiar way of life, and the solitude which, with nature, was hardly solitude to him. It was to save time for culture, and better things than society could give him. His example was not for universal imitation; but it has always seemed to me a stimulating one, and helpful to the few who can even take a partial or modified hint from it.

A writer, who knew the author of "Walden" and "The Week," wrote to a friend of mine many years ago, what I am permitted to copy here:

"I am not sure whether you had personal knowledge of Thoreau, whom I had seen a little of from time to time, and a good deal more about thirty years ago, when I spent several Sundays at his mother's house (having the same expectation of becoming a resident of Concord), and had a good many talks with him. He was a surveyor by profession, and kept a local map, which served him for a guide in his long tramps. He avoided the highways, and was reluctant even to have his feet off the turf or out of the woods. One may believe that he knew every rabbit-burrow and squirrel-hole in Concord, if not the individual physiognomy of

each wild creature. He watched them as individuals; would bring turtles' eggs in his pocket to hatch in the garden, and had an undue contempt for book-and-study naturalists, unjustly disparaging Agassiz. As Mr. Emerson said to me, he was 'so good—and so bad!'

"His hermit-like and ascetic theories were eked out by frequent sharing of Emerson's conversation and hospitality. Before 'Walden' was published I heard him give a lecture before a small audience, which began: 'I have been a good deal of a traveler—about my native village,' and went on with a very entertaining account of his experiments in living. Nonconformist as he was, he once spent a week in Concord jail for refusing to pay his taxes. His mother lived very quietly near the railroad station, and took occasional boarders—like myself. His sister was (I believe) a nurse by profession, and a grave woman of bright intelligence. She used to beat me easily at chess. His out-door life probably kept at bay the consumption he died of; though his hermitage could hardly have been good for him."

The all-sufficingness and world-microcosm of his native town he celebrated even in his verse. In his poem of "A River Scene" he exults in these lines:

"Our village shows a rural Venice,
Its broad lagoons where yonder fen is.
As lovely as the Bay of Naples
Yon placid cove amid the maples;

And in my neighbor's field of corn
I recognize the Golden Horn."

In the stanza following he adds:

"Methinks 'twas in this school of art
Venice and Naples learned their part,
But still their mistress, to my mind,
Her young disciples leaves behind."

I have always myself had an idea that his vegetarian habits, and possibly a frequent undue exposure to the cold, were about as ill-adapted as anything could be to his special constitution. An Esquimau diet of whale blubber is really just as *natural* as one of acorns and beans; and if Thoreau had partaken of it, or of something analogous, and had always kept his feet dry, perhaps he might have been living and writing now. Emerson says substantially—though I cannot quote from memory his exact words—that he would be happy standing at night in winter in the middle of a swamp. And certainly Thoreau would. But, few men could do this, or the various feats of exposure of which Thoreau was fond, without making a large subtraction from his allotted time on earth. It might be admirable from a certain point of view, but it was not the art of healthy living. It may be magnificent, but it is not war. And it is really a kind of warfare—the fight which most of us have to make against the rigors of our cold climate. We are not like Emerson's Titmouse; but Thoreau cov-

eted the immunities of the Titmouse and the Squirrel.

Mr. Sanborn says that the doctrine of what has lately been exploited as "The Simple Life" is to be found in full measure in Thoreau's writings. "His great dogma was the importance of a few things, the uselessness and embarrassment of many things, —the business of man, according to him, being with thoughts, ideas, sentiments," rather than with commodities and outward assets.

A friend tells me, as I write, that a certain visitor of Thoreau's, whom I knew well, was greatly entertained by him when they were making a boat trip over Walden Pond. On their return to the shore, Thoreau stooped down and picked a water-lily which he held up caressingly, and talked to as one might to a kitten or a child, or as a child would to its doll. He was probably saying that "You, little flower, and I, are of one lineage and ancestry," so saturated was he with man's unity with Nature. Or as Emerson says in his verse talk, to "The Rhodora":

"Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, if eyes were made for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being;
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew;
But, in my simple ignorance suppose
The self-same Power that brought me here, brought
you."

I suppose that to many of his Concord neighbors and casual acquaintances Thoreau seemed a bundle of affectations. Mr. Julian Hawthorne would cultivate the presumption, evidently, that he was posing for effect. Not at all in this way does it seem to me. The way he employed his idleness, and what he has written, seem to settle the matter in Thoreau's favor beyond question.

Thoreau's way of thought and life were not the conventional ways, surely; but if one's place as an author is to be settled by one's likeableness as a person, what a reduction from Victor Hugo's fame might be made by those who could not tolerate his mountainous self-conceit. In fact, when you come to think of it, and to use, a literary test of this sort, some ordinary, amiable minor poet might be elevated by it—if it works in the opposite direction—to an immense celebrity. As to Thoreau, who is the first and last of his species, can he not be tolerated without so much petulance and asperity? If he has not done or said something to make future generations think—if he has not added a rich treasure to our literary production that is to live some time yet—then I doubt if half a dozen writers of this continent and country will ever possess the distinction of doing so.

As a suitable ending to this commentary, perhaps Thoreau's poem of "The Fisher Boy" will serve best. It is very near to faultlessness in form; but is not aptly titled, since, as Sanborn says, "it is

so personal and characteristic." I have read it a hundred times; and I have always felt that, under the guise of parable, or paramyth, it exactly pictured his social attitude. It should have been named, I think,

"MY LIFE.

"My life is like a stroll upon the beach,
As near the ocean's edge as I can go;
My tardy steps its waves sometimes o'erreach,
Sometimes I stay to let them overflow.

"My sole employment 'tis, and scrupulous care
To place my gains beyond the reach of tides,
Each smoother pebble, and each shell more rare
Which Ocean kindly to my hand confides.

"I have but few companions on the shore:
They scorn the strand who sail upon the sea;
Yet oft I think the ocean they've sailed o'er
Is deeper known upon the strand to me.

"The middle sea contains no crimson dulse,
Its deeper waves cast up no pearls to view;
Along the shore my hand is on its pulse,
And I converse with many a shipwrecked crew."

WITH MATTHEW ARNOLD.

WHO is it that said, "I have known many distinguished and admirable persons"? Whoever has had this experience, however, without title or tuft-hunting, has durably enriched his life—since life, in the last analysis, is merely the sum of our experiences and friendships. I cannot remember a notable person, though, whom I have met by deliberately seeking him, pleasant as it is to look into the minds of those who have acquired and deserved fame. Such a privilege should come of itself, and without violence. It may be trivial to say that a mutually cordial hand-shake with Charles Dickens was a satisfaction; and yet, it came unexpectedly, and I cannot quite forget it. So when Matthew Arnold led me to a dinner table, with one encircling arm, I knew the tableau told me that the six articles I had written upon his works and his lectures here had awakened his interest. (So much by way of rather casual reminiscence.)

At that date his little volume called "Friendship's Garland" (published now, I think, with "Culture and Anarchy" in one volume)



MATTHEW ARNOLD.

Taken upon his last visit to the United States.

was hardly known in this country. In fact, its appeal was wholly English, and so English upon points very little known here, with such pictorial satire and coruscating wit thereupon, that it must have been nearly lost in the hands of the average American or foreign reader. When I stumbled upon an English copy in an old bookstall long ago, I passed it a number of times, thinking from the flavor emitted by its title that it was one of the old "Annuals" famous in the first half of the last century. I thought I knew the titles of all that Matthew Arnold had written, and yet I did not at once know that one. Presently, under the curious palimpsest which memory writes upon our mental tablets, there arose a presentiment, or a trace of suspicion, that this was not a Christmas or New Year's Annual. For, it lacked their usual morocco covers, and, though it was well made, was not quite so *de luxe* as the typical "Annual," whether English or American, generally managed to be.

Then the distinct remembrance obtruded (which was so blurred at the outset) that brought up a reference I had seen made years before to this very volume, and to Arnold's authorship of it. So I pulled it down, with the \$3 price marked upon it, and knew that I had found a prize, as well as a price. Those who know me will not need to be told that the bookseller, in whose store I was rummaging, at once made a sale of that volume.

In this little book, which I am sorry not to have before me at this moment, and whose contents I have not referred to in many years, Mr. Arnold assumed an almost semi-religious regard for England, far surpassing indeed that of all the cults and critics that from time to time have fallen a-foul of him. The book he therefore pleads, through its title, is a garland tossed upon England by her devoted friend. It is a bouquet of regard in Friendship's name, though it chastens and chides with keen, reiterant, and chirruping delight. In one general jail delivery, so to speak, he leads out and flays his critical adversaries with blows that a consummate style makes superficially velvety, but which, underneath its musically cadenced sentences, made distressing havoc in the camp of his antagonists.

My review of the volume I thought it appropriate to title "Matthew Arnold's Wittiest Book." Very naturally it called for praise; for not even his most remarkable criticisms, including that so caustic one upon the Earl of Shaftesbury, were anywhere near so brilliant, so telling, or so adroit as those in this book. But I had, in addition to the bestowal of praise, with careful analysis, to note Arnold's attitude to a government-joined church, and his absorption of that curiously absurd dogma of "Mustn't Marry Your Deceased Wife's Sister," with other exceedingly insular whims. Where so much in the man was so

broad, it seemed singular, and almost unaccountable that there should be anything so narrow as the views I have named, or hinted at. But he was even witty, if I remember rightly, in treating the Deceased Wife's Sister's "unmarry-ability," in picturing, somehow, the Non-Conformists' dreadful fury and frantic endeavor to rush after a Deceased Wife's Sister—as if the bases of the British Constitution would be uprooted and removed, if they were not permitted to do it.

It was a peculiar gratification to me to know that this article gave him unbounded satisfaction, though I cannot quote his superlatively accented words. He gave them out, in spite of my exercised freedom in not saying everything fair, and, when he knew that I had delivered to another prominent publication than the one containing the book review as thorough a piece of antagonism to his Emerson lecture as I knew how to write. Not that it was not interesting. Nothing by Arnold could be otherwise. The "Voices" that he heard in his youth sounding at Oxford, with which he began (chief among which was Emerson's), who was Carlyle's "angel" and "sunbeam," were not to be forgotten by him, or his happy citation of them by us who listened. And how much more, too, there was which we would not have lost. Then, at the end of it, it was no unworthy crown to place upon the great Concord author in calling him "the Helper of those who live in the Spirit."

With full allowance for these ascriptions, I still insisted that his tenets upon what he calls great writers and great writings were full of artificial and conventional falsity.

Premising that Emerson's prose was the most important utterance of the last century, he held to the opinion stubbornly, that neither Emerson nor Carlyle were great writers, while Macaulay was; which was not only an absurdity, but involved two propositions that do not cohere—though I have no fault to find with his Macaulay estimate. Thackeray he plainly did not like, but Swift and Addison were his models and exemplars. In this country Hawthorne and Lowell were not put very high, and, of course, no one else was. It is true Dr. Johnson anciently said that he who would write well must give up his days and nights to the study of Addison; but who really reads Addison anywhere now, or who has during the last twenty-five years? I cannot now recall, with neither his lecture nor my criticism upon it at hand, much more than the spirit and trend of his arguments,—but they seemed surprising, coming from him.

It was a schoolmaster's or pedant's pleading, as if man was made for his language, and not language for man. Dr. Johnson himself would have delivered himself differently in our time; but not even the *Zeit Geist* he acclaimed served to save Arnold from his antiquated and outgrown opinions.

His lecture upon the *Remnant* was thoroughly characteristic, and very consoling to those who prefer Right with the Few, rather than Wealth and Honors in going with the Mob-like Multitude.

On his return from his western lecture trip he asked me again for copies of the article on "Friendship's Garland," which he wished to send to England. His conversation was charming, and effusively friendly, but not assumed for the occasion. There was, indeed, a sort of childlike transparency in all that he said. I expected to find him classically stern, and defensively cold; but he opened up his whole soul without reserve. The typical Englishman, we have been often told, does not take down his natural fences to admit you within them at once. He must find out who you are. When he is satisfied that you will do, then he surrounds you with an unmistakable welcome. How this could be done more evidently than Arnold did it at the time I refer to, I cannot conceive.

I think I am not mistaken in saying that the very warm and human side of Arnold is to be emphatically found in the two large volumes of his correspondence. A little searching through their pages, I am sure, would reveal the genial fellowship that he must have given to all who deserved it, and a certain true Democracy of the spirit that his more formal writings and discourses were not written to express. How tenderly and pensively pathetic he

was is shown by his discovery of the Obermann book, and its author, Senancour; and by his poems, which have so often a canopy of shade and twilight, with a glow of saddened retrospect.

Very significant of him was his reply to that interviewer who addressed several English and American authors as to their attitude to tobacco and alcoholic drinks, and made a book of their replies. Mr. Arnold's answer was, substantially, this: "I do not use tobacco in any form, but I take a little wine occasionally, because it adds to the agreeableness of life." That he was happy with wisdom, and even boyish to the last in spirit, everything concerning him would indicate. It was a playful feat in athletics, such as he would have tried in his teens—too sudden and forcible for a weak heart—that caused his premature death. We can well accept the judgment that Chief Justice Coleridge pronounced upon him, that he was doubtless the most accomplished and commanding mind in England.

Arnold's poetry strikes too deep a furrow, and has in it too many subtleties of introspection, to ever be popular in any age of human enlightenment that can be hoped for. But it is poetry of the highest type—poetry for poets, and minds prepared for high discourse. At the outset, a good deal of it will seem dry and unmelodious. Yet, where this is most apparent, it will be still more apparent that it says something. If it lacks the too

often seen modern flourish of mere technique, it never fails to have a message, before which we may pause instructed, and with delight.

Perhaps his two epicedial poems, "The Scholar-Gipsy" and "Thyrsis"—the last a monody on his kindred spirit, Arthur Hugh Clough—are as flawless as anything he has written which is of equal length. If this paper were shaped for a full criticism of Arnold, poetically, it would be in order to quote somewhat from these highly thoughtful, and musically cadenced poems. Only, the trouble would be to take from their evenly executed measures and strophes, a single stanza, without wishing to copy every other.

His poetry, if no other is, was a true "criticism of life." And poetry itself he greatly cared for, as having the primacy of the arts. It must, he thought,

"The aspect of the moment show,
The feeling of the moment know * * *

"Beethoven, Raphael, cannot reach
The charm which Homer, Shakespeare teach."

His celebration was of the great poets—notably Shakespeare, Goethe and Wordsworth. Of the latter he says: **He**

"Spoke and loosed our heart in tears,
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth * * *

Our youth returned, for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furled
The freshness of the early world."

If he breathed out the sadness of lament largely in his verses, the unhelpable sorrow of things, he kept with stoical firmness a stern hold upon our duty—to do the best that our uncomfortable and unsolvable situation demands of us. If the outward doctrine is dark, all the more "guard the inward fire." It is truly poetry with a meaning that he offers us, and in which there is "a melody within a melody."

How well he says:

"We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides;
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides;
But tasks in hours of insight willed
Can be in hours of gloom fulfilled."

Nietsche, the wonderfully endowed, if degenerate German—half genius and half lunatic—thought that man invented conscience to save the trouble of thinking. But Arnold, to whom conscience was soothing, compelling, and fundamental, overlaid it with thought. In all that he wrote the "high seriousness" of life appears, pervading both poem and paragraph. A modern writer remarks that "Every one thinks poetry has passed, except the poet." Arnold affirmed that

"the future of poetry is immense." And, in an age of commercialism, and much disillusion, with Pan and the nymphs departed, he has pushed the Muse's torch far along.

To the doorway and beyond he walked with me in saying "Good Bye." There was a lingering look as if he loved America now that he was to leave, more than he was quite ready to confess—more, perhaps, than he at first suspected. A very cordial note came from him before sailing homeward, and when I let go of his hand, he said, cheerily: "We shall meet again." But it is one of my keen regrets that we never did.

There was so much yet to expect from him that his death seemed emphatically premature. What Landor, whom Arnold so well estimated, and in whose classical lineage he shared, so well said, became impressive in the retrospect:

"Laodamia died; Helen died; Leda, the beloved of Jupiter, went before. . . . There are no fields of amaranth on this side of the grave; there are no voices, O Rhodopè, that are not soon mute, however tuneful: there is no name with whatever emphasis of passionate love repeated, of which the echo is not faint at last."

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT BOSTON.

WHEN I told Wendell Phillips, as we were riding one day (after I had introduced him to a lecture audience the previous evening) that I had never been in Boston, the town whose centrality will be kept forever famous by Holmes's witty affirmation of it—and where to be once born is said to be born enough—his face seemed to wear at once a benignantly pitiful expression. I felt that I had fallen by this remark, as I tried to analyze his apparent wave of thought, very far down in his estimation.

And this was at least thirty years ago.

Yet the fact was also true up to the midsummer of 1903, when my opportunity came to visit the venerable and historic city. Its approaches from the west are all interesting, and, what surprised me about Eastern Massachusetts was its liberal acreage of forest and sprout land, and its constant succession of water surfaces—of streams and lakes. I supposed a country so long settled would be nearer treeless, so little does one know of a region he has never seen. The first oddity that I encountered was the group of little milk cans the farmers



BOSTON COMMON IN 1848.

use in which to send, by rail, the lacteal fluid to Boston, that have large wooden stoppers, and apparently hold about seven quarts. When I expressed surprise over this dimension, and said to a friend that the milk cans going into New York hold forty quarts, and have tin cappings, a little boy of fourteen, sitting near me, said: "Maybe the farmers in New York have larger farms than ours" —which seemed to settle the matter in his mind.

It was curious to see wide spaces in Boston Common covered with oats, though the crop might have been a foil for grass seed growing under it; but the park itself with its call of a great city to the remembrance of Nature, with its statues, its pond and the Public Garden addition, is notable and a credit to Boston's makers. The little strip of sand patch, too, with swings for the children, to whom the country is unknown, where they can make mud pies and spread themselves, and have a sort of licensed freedom, was a tender and teachable feature. It shows that Boston has heart as well as intellect.

The elevated road has better cars than those on the New York elevated. They have side doors, as well as end ones, which makes getting on and off an easy matter.

The subway was interesting, and gave one a foretaste of what is already old, and on a much larger scale in New York. The cars running through it seem clean and cool at all times. You don't have

in them the ordinary subterranean thoughts. Stuffiness and smoke are not there. Another thing as bad as either of these—the New York car manners—is also happily absent. In the cross-seated ones, at least, no one stands up. If the seats are full, the French "*Complet*," though nowhere posted, is tacitly understood. Everybody on the cars, or who is anxious to get on, is deferentially polite, and so are the guards. If you wish to find your way on either the cars or the street, any person who knows will tell you, with evident pleasure.

I was in the city when hundreds of "convention," and Emerson Memorial strangers filled the town; and, I was asked immediately on stepping off at the big station both this and that about the city, and where to go. I told the enquirers, with regret, that my two minutes' acquaintance with the place unfitted me to help them, and that I, too, should need to inquire and guess. Because Boston is a bit of a labyrinth, the residents have probably learned early to play the cicerone to those who first visit it.

One day I asked a "conventioner," while near the Public Library, some directions which he could only partly give me. He was an original Bostonian, however, but had been for a generation in the West. But he told me a good deal, and explained how the Back Bay district, where we were, was once covered with water. "Yes, that yonder is the Phillips Brooks church. The one the other side of the

street is the church of the Society to which Ralph Waldo Emerson preached and ministered." It seemed that time was nothing to him, if I would only listen to what the Boston was that he left, and learn the glory it had since added. But I finally thanked him, not without great gratitude, away.

There are some who will remember Gail Hamilton's graphic description of this city, printed forty years ago in the *Atlantic Monthly*, where she says: "No City has any moral right to be as crooked as Boston. It is a crookedness without excuse and without palliation. It is crooked in cold blood and with malice aforethought. It goes askew when it might as easily go straight. It is illogical, inconsequent and incoherent. Nowhere leads to anywhere in particular. You start from any given point, and you are just as likely to come out at one place as another. * * * The number of streets is amazing. The Bostonians seem to have a perfect frenzy for them. If they can squeeze in a six-foot passage between two houses, they are happy. Half a dozen stairs, and a brick platform, is an avenue and an elysium. They build their houses in the shape of a letter V, with the point sticking out in front, apparently for no other reason than the exquisite satisfaction of having a street pass up each side, and they make their streets crooked to look at, and then make alleys to get there."

The alleys certainly are profusely in evidence.

The four hundred and fifty-something-one I took notice of, in addition to many others. There seemed to be sidings in them all, made by taking out in places the raised side-walk; and, even with these facilities the passing of two vehicles in one would seem to involve a hair-breadth escape.

This pungent writer whom I have quoted makes Washington Street "go off into a delirium tremens, down by Cornhill and Dock Square," where Faneuil Hall "is perpetually dancing a jig" with the latter. "There never was," she says, "such a misnomer as Dock Square. Dock Dodecagon would be nearer the truth, for a dodecagon has regular sides, but there is not a regular side to anything from one end of Boston to the other."

The picturesque description ends, however, with a positive eulogium upon the city, in spite of its tortuous and bewildering ways.

Its oldness, truly enough, its saturated history, its traditions, and atmosphere, its culture and much else, imprint a wonderful sense of charm, worth and dignity. Park Street, and the vicinity of the new State House, seem to represent its center, and, walking around from there, you soon meet the features most talked of. King's Chapel and the Old South Church, Faneuil Hall and the Old Corner Book Store, are among those that most interested me. You can tell them from their often seen pictures. The books and business connected with the place last named have sought new quarters, but the

building I found standing, emblazoned with a call to a different nutriment than that which it once dispensed, in these words hugely inscribed:

BALTIMORE DAIRY LUNCH.

To see its interior, I went in and ordered something to relieve two longings, the material one being of least account. When that was satisfied, I walked around the L-shaped room, and imagined its old habitues back, recalling the while Keats's line:

"Great spirits with us once were sojourning."

If the walls could only phonograph to us what Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, Whittier and the others in that group have said there, whose *mots* are now melted in the unrestoring air, what a volume of Table (or Counter) Talk one might secure. But the mental flashes were silent before the domination of doughnuts and milk.

Perhaps the building, the oldest one built of brick in Boston (1712), will have departed before this comment is in type. (Since writing this, it has.) Only a few will miss the recent lunch supplies; but the literary flavor destroyed has already awakened wide regret. This building was on the corner of Washington and School Streets. On the opposite corner Gen. Nelson A. Miles was once clerk in a crockery store, and, in the store next, on Washing-

ton Street, Col. W. S. Church was a book clerk in his boyhood.

There is the Public Library to speak of, and very solid and beautiful it is. Its decorations have stirred differing pens to debate, and yet its composite features—interior and exterior—are unmistakably impressive to all who behold it. Its practical service for use and joy provokes no dissent. Books in Boston are really as plentiful and characteristic as water is in the ocean. It is said two million and a half volumes are in the city, accessible to the resident and stranger. If these were distributed to each person, every one, children and babies included, would have more than a book in each hand.

The spectacled cold-blooded girl, who has been made as typical of this city as the aerial codfish of one of its domes, I did not find as numerous as one is told she is. The American girl seems now, like Webster's idea of the national union, made everywhere "one and indivisible"; and the same assortments of her can be found in Boston as elsewhere. Boston's surroundings alone would require a volume to report. Think of Bunker Hill, Cambridge, Concord, Lexington, Brook Farm, and the whole retinue which you easily reach by trolley or other cars. Two epiciedial features, the new Gen. Hooker statue, added to statues too numerous to name, and the old cemeteries on the city streets, with monuments and marking stones so mossy and old, an-

nounce emphatically the city's long and eventful life.

Emerson has zealously extolled Boston, in both his prose and verse, as a town which "has a history."

"It is not an accident, not a windmill, or a railroad station, or crossroads tavern, or an army barracks grown by time and luck to a place of wealth, but a sort of humanity of men of principle, obeying a sentiment and marching loyally whither that should lead them; so that its annals are great historical lines, inextricably national, part of the history of political liberty. I do not speak with any fondness, but the language of coldest history, when I say that Boston commands attention as the town which was appointed in the destiny of nations to lead the civilization of North America."

In another connection he makes this little story pictorially descriptive of Boston's excellence.

"We are citizens of two fair cities," said the Genoese gentleman to a Florentine artist, "and if I were not a Genoese, I should wish to be Florentine." "And I," replied the artist, "if I were not Florentine"—"You would wish to be Genoese," said the other. "No," replied the artist, "I should wish to be Florentine."

Two of Boston's streets, named Winter and Summer, run nearly together, and Summer is the longest. Commonwealth Avenue is one of the city's most interesting thoroughfares, with Dart-

mouth Street, which it intersects, a good second. This avenue Richard Grant White pronounced the most suitable street in the world for a gentleman's home, and "without a peer in any city."

It has been said that "Boston is not a city—but a state of mind"; which is, perhaps, the compliment it would most covet. This reminds one of what Arthur Symons says of cities—that they have personality. Rome, Venice, Seville he loves; Moscow and Naples he hates, and Madrid, Vienna, St. Petersburg and Berlin "have nothing to say" to him. For him, "cities are like people, with souls and temperaments of their own," and "it has always been one of my chief pleasures," he says, "to associate with the souls and temperaments congenial to me among them." To have been in Boston, I have found, is to wish to be there again.



IN 1854.

THE PERSONALITY OF HORACE GREELEY.

TO have seen Horace Greeley just once, and for a reasonable space of time, with some intimacy, was to carry away a fond and cherished remembrance. My privilege for at least a dozen years was more frequent than this, and more various in respect to him in every way. Although, as a boy, I had read bound copies of his *New Yorker*, and the early *Tribune*, my attention was first emphatically called to him, personally, when he passed within two miles of my country home, before the Civil War, to address an audience in the county where I lived, much farther away. But he had returned to New York before I knew of this proximity. On his way from the cars he lost his spectacles and was in much tumult of trouble thereupon, until they were found—so necessary were they to all the exercises of his life. But they were soon rescued, and he was made exuberantly happy.

I mention this trivial circumstance, because it is distinctly illustrative of his personality and his

temperament. In my earliest visit to his home at Chappaqua, he had lost his axe, and it recalled to me what I had heard of the spectacles incident. To one of the family he said—when he discovered the loss—with anguish more than anger, “What rascal has taken my axe?” But no one had stolen it. Either he, or some one who wished to isolate it for his home-coming, had put it under the sitting-room sofa. From this covert it was promptly delivered to him, whereupon a boyish delight overspread and illuminated his face.

His extreme desire for the axe was the result of his fond habit on Saturdays—his only day at Chappaqua—of going into his woods to chop down elders, and various other underbrush, and to trim the trees. Like Gladstone, and he was somewhat like this English statesman in other respects, too, he would cut down and trim trees, in the woods, but the back-door wood-pile had no fascination for him.

“See,” he said to me once, pointing to the tall spire-like trees on his side hill, “those will be wanted for masts some day, when the timber in the Maine woods grows scarcer.” And he was very proud of their looks and loftiness, and of the fact that this condition was the work of his own hands. So anxious, indeed, was he to get to the woods on his Friday night arrival from the *Tribune* office, between five and six P.M., that he often went there with his axe before tea, and, in the

morning following, not infrequently before breakfast. He was pleased, even when working there, to have a chosen friend or guest go with him, and he sometimes carried a magazine or two along, to divert his company, when talking ebbed. I remember his handing one to me on a visit of this sort, and then conveying me to a rocky seat, near which he was to do his chopping. He remarked, while doing this, that I might talk, without reading, if that was my preference, as it would not in any way disturb him.

Usually, with men of eminence, it is not always quite easy to talk. For, a person of reasonable modesty is much more desirous of listening to a distinguished person than he is of hearing his own voice. With Mr. Greeley, however, conversation was not difficult, for he had a tolerant desire for anything you could say, and you could not readily present a topic with which he was not familiar, and scarcely one on which he had not formed an opinion. At the farm, however, his woods, the meadow below them, which he had created by careful drainage when it was a swamp, and all out of door matters held him best. Whenever I saw him, whether more than one was present or not, he never seemed to dominate the conversation, or to choose what it should be about. You could, therefore, when in his presence, have such a field of thought to exploit as you might elect, with no tyrannical voice to drown you out.

It happened that when he desired to drain his swamp, I was able—at his request—to secure for him the tile he needed from a tile-yard just established within sight of my home. Naturally, when we went together over his manufactured meadow, to see where the main volume of water emptied itself in a small natural runlet, he pointed for me with pride to its full, unobstructed flow. I expressed pleasure over the fact that the tile were so good. "*They* are all right," he said, "but the railroad killed me with its heavy freight bill on them."

Then we jumped over the stone wall together, on which I remember he sat for a moment, glancing a happy look over the landscape. His face then was smooth and round, showing an almost youthful glow, and making him seem, as he no doubt felt, like a somewhat larger boy than he was when he attended the little, square school house in New Hampshire. I think few men, indeed, ever carry into mature life, so long, that essence of child-like frankness and feeling that Mr. Greeley illustrated. In all that he did, his confiding openness of mind was apparent. I never, however, talked politics with him in a combative way, for we were only casually in unison on this subject; but the admirable trait about him was that his politics were sincerely the result of his own conclusions. No party committee or caucus could change them. They might not be the wisest for a particular campaign, but

they were his, and they were not hidden when the *Tribune* appeared.

Those fussy persons, at any rate, whose worship is Expediency, who occasionally visited the *Tribune* office to dictate its attitude, or to ask the suppression of some editorial that they were told was in the air—which they thought would prove bad policy—got a hint of personality, and a Saxon force of defying utterance, that astonished them, and which they never forgot. Even Commodore Vanderbilt went down the *Tribune* stairway on one occasion, after he had vainly thought he could impose his wish upon Mr. Greeley, greatly enlightened, and not only enlightened but surprised. The words with which he expressed his wonder, over the independence and obstinacy of certain editors, were not those commonly heard in Sunday schools, if they have been reported correctly.

Mr. Greeley's opinions of things, and of persons, were held by cords of different strength. The first he reached almost once for all, and then never, or rarely, changed them. In his opinions of persons, however, he frequently made changes, either slight or absolute. His personal attachments were always strong, and remained so when they were justified, while his dislikes were by no means feeble. His way, with those who were not congenial to him, was like that of Uncle Toby's with the fly. They might go their way without his molestation, as the world is wide enough for all.

Small and very simple things interested him. When walking on the border of his little stream, by the side of which we reached a spring, only one of several on the farm, we discovered, on one occasion, no cup. As he had allotted a cup to each, this absence of one annoyed him. But when I folded a large leaf, in something like cornucopia fashion, and showed him how to dip with it, and drink therefrom, he exhibited a child's delight. Although I have no skill whatever in doing anything manual, or mechanical, I once accidentally, when I was driving with him, hit and killed with the whip a horse-bee on the predatory wing, after a few attempts, which he previously thought I could not do. But, when it was done, he very pleasantly acknowledged his disappointed opinion. Of course these are trivial matters enough, but they belong to the simplicity and simpleness of country life; and, possibly, they suggested the environment of his childhood, which no metropolitan career or wide fame could ever extinguish.

I think if the world could have been mended after his fashion, or if he could have prospered by an agricultural career, he would never have cared for the glory of public attention, or resounding fame. These fell upon him, of necessity, and not through personal choice, or skillful planning. In agriculture his main hobbies were deep plowing—increasing the acreage of the farm downwards—and the

foresting and re-foresting of cut off woods, stony knolls, and obstinate fields everywhere.

He liked in early life simple food; and, a bread and milk supper in the country was common with him in later life. At one time he practiced for a while a Graham bread, and a vegetable diet, and gave them his endorsement. But he conformed gracefully and with satisfaction to the finest French *cuisine*. I have seen him eat a luxurious breakfast at a once famous French Restaurant, then on the west side of Union Square, and I saw him, when he presided over the Dickens's Farewell dinner at Delmonico's, go as diligently through the elaborate courses (it was a \$15 dinner) as any of the eminent guests; everybody there—as it was supposed—being somebody. The first meal I ever saw him eat nearly took my breath away, as I supposed at the time I made his acquaintance that he was then a Grahamite; or a Trallite, which was to come as near a sawdust and shavings diet as possible. But instead of calling for even corn bread, and the simpler dishes provided on his account, he at once asked for the high spiced sausage, and buckwheat cakes, and strong coffee with which to wash them down.

Mr. Murat Halstead says that, at the Dickens's dinner, Mr. Greeley held a rose bouquet, which was doubtless true. But it was true that all of the guests had one, for, in a small glass which stood among the five that were placed for wine, at each

plate, was a *boutonniere* of this sort. It was proffered as a compliment to Dickens, who always wore one like it when giving his readings. Each guest put his bouquet in the appropriate button-hole of his coat, but Mr. Greeley, who presided, when the after-dinner speeches were made, probably did hold his in his hand as a sort of mnemonic talisman. That he should ever wear a flower, or a bouquet on his coat, would have seemed entirely out of square with his habits.

Dress, since we have come to that, was with Mr. Greeley not a subject for esthetic concern. He did not emulate Beau Brummel, and, the tying of a cravat or the fitting of clothes he, evidently, spent very little time over. The latter seemed as if they had been tossed upon him, and had always a liberal looseness. In the heyday of Henry Clay he wore a white surtout—which we call now an overcoat—and a white hat. On a certain evening I wore this overcoat for a two-miles' ride, when an Autumn night became suddenly cold, and it went, or might have gone, once and a half around me. It had then long rested from active use, but it proved once more eminently useful.

One of Mr. Greeley's keenest repartees was drawn from him by a rival editor, who had gaily commented on his wardrobe, the said editor having before this violated the anti-duelling law. Mr. Greeley's reply was to the effect that, though his dress might not reach the style and fit of the

fashion plate, it would not compare with that which the aforesaid editor would be wearing, had it not been for the clemency of Gov. Seward. When a practical joker once remarked, in presence of Mr. Greeley, and a group of friends, that he and Mr. Greeley had drunk a great deal of brandy and water together, he replied, "Yes, you drank the brandy and I drank the water."

It has been the fashion now for many years to say that Mr. Greeley became, late in life, exceedingly avid of office, and that the Presidential election of 1872 caused his death. In the inferences these statements are meant to force, there is sheer, absolute falsehood. As I had a good deal to do with that campaign in one county, and with the liberal movement preceding it, and with Mr. Greeley at the time referred to, I know—for too many reasons to state here—that he received the nomination without expecting or working for it. He was, in truth, while deserving all that the nomination implied, the least of an office seeker of any one so prominent in his party as he was. Disease and overwork, and not disappointment, were the cause of his physical decline and death.

He was a personality that, if not the greatest, or among the greatest America has to show, was yet very rare and interesting. Franklin would doubtless have liked him, and he, though impatient with the war's slowness in 1862, and therefore with Lincoln, came at last to see Lincoln's rare

and immeasurable genius. He could confess correction, when the data for it became thoroughly convincing, and shape his argument to hold the new light discovered. His taste for literature, and even for poetry, was decided and intelligent. That his handwriting was notably hieroglyphic every one has heard. But, when you once learned its alphabet, its illegibility was not so apparent as its homeliness.

In a notice which I wrote of his death, I quoted, from Tennyson, these apt lines, which still seem as appropriate for him as for Wellington:

“He is gone who seemed so great,
Gone—but nothing can bereave him
Of the force he made his own
Being here; and we believe him
Something far advanced in state,
And that he wears a truer crown
Than any wreath that man can weave him.”



C. N. BOVEE.

A PHILOSOPHER IN LETTERS AND IN LIFE.

THE death in January, 1894, of C. N. Bo-
vee, who was born in the city of
New York February 22, 1820, re-
moved from the throngs of life an in-
dividual of marked personality and singular
purity of character. More than any one I ever
knew, he was an apostle of "sweetness and light."
To him the material side of life was merely the
frame that held the contents; for he was an inborn
idealist, and lived more in the things that concern
the spirit, than with any hope or care for the prizes
of gain or elevation that entice the multitude. His
formal education was obtained in private schools,
supplemented by more advanced study under the
instruction of Goold Brown, of English grammar
fame—though his own reading and inquisitive
search for the secret of things, later, gave a liberal
range to all his acquirements.

After leaving school he was—in 1843—ad-
mitted to the Bar; and, at one time and another, in
partnership with several attorneys of prominence,

doing office work rather than court oratory, and always in his element when among books. Having literary tendencies of inextinguishable force, he became the friend of Bancroft, Irving, Emerson, Holmes, Longfellow and Tuckerman, and was met by them all on their own level. His literary tastes led him to edit at one time a journal of ideas, which was probably too good to live long; and which, while largely ideal, was titled, "Thoughts and Events." It was, at any rate, in aërial commodities mostly that he was mainly interested, and there are many who must still remember his contributions of apothegms of singularly clear cut brightness that he gave over forty years ago to the *Atlantic Monthly*. Under the title of "Intuitions and Summaries of Thought" they, with subsequent additions, were assembled in two twelve-mo volumes, which (although they must have been long out of print) it will well reward the book-hunter for choice morsels to look up and secure. His first book, "Thoughts, Feelings and Fancies," appeared in two volumes in 1846.

Thoughts were his supreme treasure, as dollars are mainly the shining objects which others pursue. He carried a Pocket Book because he must; but it was his Thought Book that held in his mind the pre-eminence, and made the convex protuberance visible in his coat. Emerson, it was said, awoke in the night, and awoke his wife in concern over his ambition to record a vagrant thought. But

Mr. Bovee would stop anywhere between the soup and dessert of a dinner to catch one that hovered in his mental horizon.

His method of expression was one of *aperçus*, so to speak. He merely strove, as he said, to mark the "point of suggestion," or the several points, leaving it to the reader to round out the fit conclusion. He was a really pure transcendentalist, and gave you the tangents that lead to truth without twisting them into a hard and fast system. He chose words that were perspicuous and forceful, re-writing often what he had set down, and putting in light and playful antithesis the substance or protoplasm for opinions. Thoreau complained once that the age was so gross and greedy that, if one were seen to take a note-book from his pocket in the fields, it would be said he was figuring up his accounts or his profits. But, if it were Thoreau or Bovee, the intelligent observer would know that the only wealth concerned would be sidereal or spiritual, or a study, perhaps, of some prismatic, or opalescent sunset crowning a quiet landscape.

When he talked, or wrote friendly letters, he was luxuriously diffuse in style. But when he set down for embalment in cold type his ideas, they were made pungent and condensed—absolute cameos in brevity and beauty of expression. His work greatly surpasses Colton's once much praised "Lacon," if he did not quite reach the supreme delicacy of the *pensées* of Joubert. In almost all

modern anthologies of mixed sayings he has a large space. There is one, indeed, where he occupies nearly as much room as either Shakespeare or Pope, and on whose title-page a sentence of his furnishes the fit motto.

Serenity and kindliness were among his notable characteristics. His sympathetic feeling and help towards the founding of a Hospital were merely the public manifestation of an habitual kindness that was active for all. But he rose to an irrepressible enthusiasm when something was proposed to stimulate thought, or to advance Art. The world does not forget to promote the Useful, he knew, as well as Goethe; and it *does* need some prompting to cultivate or care for the Beautiful. So he aroused himself to speak, and work heartily, for the more lonesome cause, and for its endowments.

For Mr. Stimson's noble effort on behalf of Art-Artisanship he could not say too much. It was an effort, to quote Emerson's couplet, to

"Give to barrows, trays and pans
Grace, and glimmer of romance."

—to make the things of homeliest use things of beauty as well. Or, to take from quaint old Herbert the thought differently announced, we learn,

"Who sweeps a room, as for Thy law,
Makes that and the action fine."

Had he been a millionaire, or had Mr. Stimson's health remained in full force, there would be an Art-Artisan University in this city to-day that would draw attention and patronage from the whole civilized world.

Until the cruel trolley car gave him an irremediable injury, when he was in his seventies, he had the looks, activity and manner of a man on the sunny border of middle age. The boy going out to skate, or snow-ball, was not more hope-elate or sunny-spirited than he always seemed to be. While not without his share of human disappointments and sorrow; it may be of foiled ambitions—though they could not have been selfish ones; he was a true Optimist on whose lips you could always read the saying of the old Sun-Dial:

Horas non numero nisi serenas.

I think I am right in saying that he has left many notes and meditations unprinted, both partly and wholly compressed. But they will need an editor of his type and spirit for their proper public presentation. After all—and a good deal more might be said—the man was himself much more than all his mottoes and musings. His was a wholly pure translucent spirit. A coarse, or a vulgar thought, he abhorred. The love of friends, and the stimulus to culture and high thinking were the source of all his pleasures and activities. But he would not parade these spectacularly.

Shrinking from large publicity, he only whispered his messages privately, or with himself in abeyance, as the vocal zephyr murmurs its music through the needles of the pines. Those of us who knew him well will miss him long, but we cannot expect again to find so sweet and jocund a spirit, one whom age could not (and only disease and death could) separate from life, and its cheery glow of radiant hope and perennial juvenescence.

One cannot sample felicitously a stately and well-ordered edifice by showing a few of the bricks that compose it; but, copying here a few of his sentences that are nearest to my hand may not be amiss. Of course there has been no thorough selection—so that the average line of merit may not be reached in what is offered below:

“Motives are better than actions. Men drift into crime. Of evil they do more than they contemplate, and of good they contemplate more than they do.

Address makes opportunities; the want of it gives them.

It is invidious to distinguish particular men as adventurers: we are all such.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes quotes Balzac as saying that the love-making capacity of a man is greatest at about fifty. Something like this is intimated by Bacon in his essay on Youth and Age. “Heat and vivacity in age,” he says, “are an excellent composition for business.” He also tells us that “Natures that have much heat and great and violent desires and perturbations, are not ripe for action till they have passed the meridian of their years.”

"Absolutism is one man's aggrandizement and all men's abasement.

Beauty can afford to laugh at distinctions: it is itself the greatest distinction.

It is hard to compare two things and be unjust to neither.

The safest calculations are those in which something is allowed for miscalculation."

It may be interesting to add here a few paragraphs from some letters of his eminent correspondents:

N. P. Willis, writing to Mr. Bovee from "Idlewild," November 26, 1858, says: "Returning from a fortnight's trip to the South, I find your letter on my table, and my wife and daughter delightedly turning over the leaves of your book of gems. I shall try to say the appreciative word, as to it, in print."

Richard Grant White, under date of January 22, 1863, writes in part as follows: "For two years I have found time to read but one book—'Great Expectations,'—for the sake of mere enjoyment. A glance through your elegant volumes, however, shows me that as 'the ancients have stolen the ideas of us moderns,' so you have stolen many of mine—an objection which you must not be surprised to find many people making to your 'Intuitions.' Already I have heard a lady declare that your notions about the treatment of second wives by their husbands are her property, and that

she wonders how you could have found out what she has never told to anybody."

M. M. Ballou, author of "Treasures of Thought," has this to say, in a letter dated February 4, 1870: "I have increased my selection from yourself to over one hundred excerpts. . . It will be in poor taste for me to flatter, but I had much rather have produced the 'Intuitions' than to have received a pecuniary legacy making me independent."

Oliver Wendell Holmes addresses Mr. Bovee on October 14, 1882, from Beverley Farms. In a long and interesting letter he says:

"I thank you for your letter which I read with much interest. I went back with you to the time when these dear and illustrious friends of ours were gathered around the table at *Parker's*—for that was our place of meeting. I could hardly believe so many years were gone since you were our visitor, but when I look at the empty seats or the new faces it comes home to me how lonely is my position at the old table. For we cannot make good the places of those we have lost—at least the young, no matter how brilliant or promising, seem crude and raw as we contrast them with our old refined comrades. By and by they in their turn will mellow and sweeten with years—but the men you saw formed a group not easy for Nature to duplicate in a single locality and in one generation.

. . . . "I have often met thoughts of yours as quoted, and surely if the pebble is worth something, the quarry is worth more. With kindest wishes,
very sincerely yours, O. W. HOLMES."

Perhaps a fitting conclusion to what I have prof-
fered in appreciation can be best made by the fol-
lowing letter to Mr. Bovee's son, which explains
itself. It is from our late ambassador to England,
and came to hand after the above sketch was com-
pleted:

4, Carlton Gardens, S. W.

February 4, 1904.

Dear Mr. Bovee:

I thank you very much for sending me the brief
notice of your dear old father, for whom I always
had a great liking. He was so full of pleasant rem-
iniscence and cheerful philosophy that it was ever
a great pleasure to meet him. He has left you at a
ripe old age, and with a record in which you have
nothing to regret.

I do hope that some adequate memoir of him will
be forthcoming. With his correspondence and remi-
niscences of his eminent literary associates whose
sympathy with him was so close, as evidenced by
Dr. Holmes's letter, there must be much worth pre-
serving.

I can offer no regrets, for death at eighty-four must
always be welcome, but I do felicitate you and your
mother and sisters most heartily on his fine character
and record.

Yours most truly,

JOSEPH H. CHOATE.

C. N. Bovee, Esq.

THE PERSONALITY OF P. T. BARNUM.

WHAT one noticed first and most in the late P. T. Barnum, the greatest of showmen, was his abounding vitality and overflowing humor. After his death, and for some time after, his traits were so firmly embedded in the world's memory that his personality seemed still to be going on. As a magazine editor said to me, "He is more alive, practically, than many who are still living." While he was a showman by choice and liking, and wished always to emphasize that fact, even when prosperity would have given him freedom for a more courtly calling, or for absolute leisure, there were various other vocations in which he would have won both eminence and success.

If it is generally known, it is not usually remembered that he was an editor when in his teens. His paper, the *Herald of Freedom*, was published in Danbury, Ct., his native town, of which Bethel was once a part, and the part which has the distinction of giving him birth. It was as an editor, indeed, that he gained his first celebrity; for, with more energy in behalf of truth than he possessed



IN 1854.

on behalf of a wise discretion, he heralded freedom altogether too earnestly, by lashing a staid deacon of one of the leading churches for a pernicious and even scandalous treatment of one who was subjected to his power and caprice.

What he wrote was true and justly said, but the Connecticut libel law of that date was of the most stringent character, and based upon the old maxim that "the greater the truth" in the article objected to "the greater the libel." While he was doing the public a good service by his unlawful strictures he was sued and put in jail for making them. From the jail, however, he continued to edit his paper, and, when the brief term of detention there was served, he was drawn in a carriage by the populace to his home and accorded by them an almost kingly ovation.

This event became soon a national topic, and gave him the beginning of his notoriety. So much was this so that President Van Buren, when he made a trip through New England, and met in his popular greetings, the young Barnum, said laughingly, at once, "Oh, you are the young editor who was put in jail." And Barnum quite enjoyed the joke, as it was made with a perfect sense of the equities that had been outraged by a bitter and antiquated statute.

As an editor Mr. Barnum might have continued with real professional ability, but he aimed for greater financial success than a small provincial

sheet could give him in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Just what it was (though there must have been some alluring incidents) that influenced him to accept the showman's career I am not able to say. But he began it when the elephant alone was a sufficient show, without accessories, athletic or other, to give variety. In the far away 30's of the last century a blanketed elephant was taken from one rural town to another, and exhibited in some farmer's barn. The admittance to see it was a sixpence for boys, and twelve and a half cents for the adult portion of the audience. The driver and trainer told the gaping crowd of the animal's nature and habits, all of which, as well as the great pachyderm himself, were, nearly seventy years ago, as unfamiliar as the great auk (if he could be revived from extinction) would be to-day.

Curious things, tricks of legerdemain, and the like, which puzzled a crowd, were attractive beyond measure to Barnum. He could do these tricks, many of them, to perfection. If, instead of being the purveyor of a show, he had chosen to be a performer in it, he would have succeeded to a considerable fame in that way. Those of us who heard Charles Dickens read from his own works when he was here in 1868, on his second visit to America, saw at once that he might have been successful as a dramatic artist on the stage,

vocally, as he was known to be as a story teller. He had the mobility of face and expression, the sense of the ridiculous and the pathetic, which make a large part of the player's necessary equipment.

These faculties, exercised casually, were also in Mr. Barnum's possession; and would have grown by cultivation. Upon the Puritan gloom and deep seriousness of the New England mind and temper, prevalent in his boyhood, he threw his ever-ebullient cheery humor, and sought and affiliated with those who broke from rigid and superfluously strait-laced bonds. If he heard of a good thing in the way of fun or a trick, though it might have been worked upon himself, he gave new life to it and sent it on. He told me once that he was informed when a boy and living in Bethel, Ct., of a wonderful dog that was seen around a local tannery not far away which had two tails—one at each extremity of his body. Someone in the village store, perhaps, vouched for such a freak with the most earnest asseveration.

Barnum listened to this tale (of two tails) and went the next day to see the curiosity. He did not find it; but, before he left the tannery premises he was assured of the absolute truth of the amazing story. On the day before a dog had stepped in the building, and gnawing an ox tail from a hide, went out in a neighboring field with this caudal appendage in his mouth. There was no doubt but that, temporarily, he was a "dog with two tails."

It may be that this early incident prepared him to take, during the later New York period of his career, that shrewd philosophical acceptance of his manager's unfortunate purchase, at the Broadway and Ann Street Museum, of the so-called "cherry-colored cat." It was a hay-seed countryman who brought the cat to the Museum, and Mr. Greenwood, at the box office, purchased it, on faith, not by sight, for \$25. When it was delivered from the sack where it was concealed, and given to Mr. Greenwood, the seller quietly remarked that he had omitted to mention "it was a black cherry" that he had in mind. The protest of the manager over this smooth and thrifeful employment of technical truth on behalf of falsity in essence, was so loud and energetic that it arrested Mr. Barnum's attention, and brought him to the scene of conflict. Being told of the transaction, he insisted that the seller had fulfilled his promise—met all the terms of the contract, in fact—and that the \$25 agreed upon must be paid to him. Probably he impressed upon his manager afterwards the wisdom of *caveat emptor*; but, I suspect it is an apocryphal, though a currently understood conclusion of the story, to say that he advertised it after the seller's manner, and then dumped it out upon, and moved himself from the stage rapidly, with the remark, that it "was a black cherry-colored cat" that he had in mind.

Of jocose stories in Mr. Barnum's career, both

familiar and unfamiliar, there is no end. The experiences connected with them he greatly enjoyed, even when the joke fell upon himself. A little-known one of this species I had from his own lips when I was riding with him one day through a portion of Bridgeport, where much of his real estate holding was on both sides of the street. Pointing to a triangular lot of low land, he said, "I tried to buy that the other day of Mr. So-and-so, and he asked an outrageous price for it." He intimated that he wouldn't give that, but, he would pay much more than it was worth to have the lot, which was entirely surrounded by land of his own. After much talk between Mr. B.'s neighbor and himself, the former finally remarked: "Don't you know, Mr. Barnum, that that lot you want to buy is your own, already? I don't own it."

"Well," said Barnum, "you were a fool not to sell it to me at some price on a quitclaim deed. The joke would be worth \$25 anyway, and I would have gladly paid it."

It was always the humor and comedy of things that first arrested his attention, though he had a very tender side, too, and sympathy for what was sorrowful and pathetic. On a certain Fourth of July celebration, held in the Court House Park, in Bridgeport, the late Salem H. Wales presided, and Mr. Barnum and others made speeches for the occasion. When Mr. Wales introduced Barnum, he, of course, was studiously facetious, as

the situation would naturally compel him to be, so little was an introduction necessary in this case. But Barnum was not confused nor upset by the happy badinage. His repartee was ready when the moment for speaking arrived; and something like this was the way he prefaced his remarks: "I don't know, fellow citizens and neighbors, why I am asked to speak here to-day. I have really nothing important to offer; and my business should have kept me in New York. While Wales is here showing me up, I ought to be at the Museum showing up whales." And much more he added, with that genial twinkle of the eye which was an unvarying accompaniment to his playful words.

It was at his home where his hospitality was generous, that one could study best his traits and temperament. Thoreau said once, "I have three chairs in my house: one for solitude, two for friendship, and three for society." Mr. Barnum had little use for the first, except while writing in his comfortable library; but for friendship and society he set apart always a liberal provision, of both space and time. To enlarge the latter for recreation when we were together, I sometimes looked over his proofs and tabulated the data which he was to employ in making the articles that were solicited from him for the magazines. One day while I was doing this he said to me: "What were *our* opinions on this subject before? I suppose they can be changed if it is thought necessary." But I

cannot repeat the way in which he said this, which gave it its deliciously absurd flavor.

He was a perfect repertory of good stories and had on easy call all that were going. To hear a good one on his part, was to remember it forever after. If he did not always reproduce its exact setting he could supply a better one. One that pleased him very much was the story of a conceited, fussy man, very fond of good clothes and personal adornment, who went to a reception, for which occasion he had purchased an expensive silk hat of the latest London pattern. He left the hat in the cloakroom, where nothing was checked, and became so much interested in the company in the parlor that he was among the latest half dozen to leave. When he stepped across the hall for his hat, he was in a state of excited inquiry, asking the servant wildly, "Where is my hat? I brought one here brand new, and there is none to be seen fit to wear." "Oh," said the servant, without much conciliatory effect, "all the *good* hats went an hour ago." Which suggested a lottery pool that the proud and irate loser could not contemplate with calmness or resignation. But the story requires Mr. Barnum's way of telling it.

It was his early press connection, no doubt, that gave him his keen sense of the value of publicity in the promotion of business. The dispensers of printer's ink, at any rate, he always regarded as his special friends. The actress Rachel, is reported

as saying this: "I have heard many men of wit declare that it is better to be maltreated by the press than to suffer its silence or oblivion." I am inclined to think, however, that she got the germ of her idea from Barnum's reply to an irate editor, who, taking umbrage at something, threatened the showman with a series of sharp excoriations. "All right," said Barnum, "write what you like. I don't care what you say. It's only when the press lets me alone and says nothing, that I am hurt."

His elephant, plowing in full sight of the New York and New Haven Railway, his brass band on the Museum balcony at Broadway and Ann Street, in the early days of his career, his talk of buying Shakespeare's house to bring to this country, and the report that he intended to purchase Niagara Falls, and its vicinage, were all methods of keeping his name and business on men's lips. He had, therefore, a solid reason for wishing to be widely known; and, in due time acquired a distinct delight in being celebrated. When, on one occasion a simple-minded citizen of India sent him a letter, superscribed as follows:

"MR. BARNUM, AMERICA."

and the letter arrived promptly at Bridgeport, he was greatly pleased. The incident was pretty good evidence to show that he was the best known man in the world. This letter and its envelope he had framed, and hung upon the walls at "Waldemere,"

one of his successive Bridgeport houses. There is a story current that when Matthew Arnold was once his guest, he introduced to this English author the differences in human distinction, and said: "You, Mr. Arnold, have acquired Fame, while I possess only Notoriety."

A certain habit of underrating what he did, when he formed the Seaside Park in Bridgeport, set out 17000 trees in the streets of the city, made new streets, and did manifold things of a like nature, was put forth by his own phrasing as "a profitable philanthropy." By some of these enterprises he was benefited, without doubt, but it was incidental, merely, and without diminishing their general beneficence. Of his aiding good causes, whether they were in a line with his own opinions or not, and helping quietly certain persons of deserving need, there were too many instances to name here.

I suppose the beginning of his success was due to his discovery of Tom Thumb. The exaltation of his activities from mere appeal to curiosity to the dominance of lofty and imperishable art, was accomplished by bringing to America Jenny Lind. He was in the Connecticut Legislature a few times, and he was a lecturer many times. His well-known geniality, and financial success brought him bushels of begging letters of the usual absurd and preposterous character. Mark Twain, who once looked some of them over, said it would be impossible for any deliberate and professional humor-

ist to match them in the production of mirth.

One trait which was habitual with him, was his asking advice from people of all sorts about certain projects he had in hand, whether it was arranging some landscape effect in his own grounds, or his conduct of his larger business. He listened carefully to this usual conflict of opinion, and then followed the hints which, to himself, seemed best. Once, when his mammoth gold garbed chariots were to be loaded on the railway train he endeavored to see the work done. I said to him, playfully, "Do you really know just how they ought to be lifted and moved?" "No," he said, "no more than a child would. But I looked wise, and gave orders, and the men were more careful on this account." He thought, with Voltaire, that even the superfluous is sometimes necessary.

He had always a cheerful hope, a nimble wit, and a real genius for happiness. Providing pleasure for the public and especially for children was not merely his business—it entered into the very texture of his being. His repartees and even his puns, were rained upon you with a certain charm, and were things to remember. He had a real Websterian head, and an acute sensitiveness to the thoughts and things that he encountered. Nothing in his elevation to power, and wide publicity, changed his plain, everyday democratic manners; and, when he died, it was as if the city in which he had lived so long had been visibly depopulated.



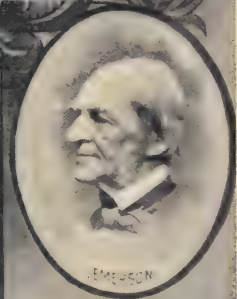
THOREAU



THOREAU'S HOUSE



EMERSON'S HOUSE



EMERSON

IN EMERSON'S AND THOREAU'S TOWN.

I SUPPOSE the mental process of unconsciously arranging some picture of the looks and topography of towns we hear much about, but have not visited, is a common experience. The town may be large, like London or Paris, or a mere country village; but, if it has long interested us through anecdote and story, a certain definite pictorial conception of it is sure to stand clearly out as a piece of the mind's necessary furniture. Often when the reality rises before us, we find it mainly correct, or, at the worst, showing merely a few mistakes of detail.

What for many years I had pictured the Massachusetts Concord to be, however, came substantially true the other day when I first saw it. Except that it was much larger than the conception shaped in my boyhood, with no later allowance for the lapse of time, and that Emerson's house is at the right, instead of on the left, of the main street as you go up from the Boston and Maine depot to the square and town hall, I found nothing in my imag-

ination of it to be incorrect. The older Concord stood out definitely enough from the newer and smarter residences scattered about, so that I seemed to have really seen the place before.

My permanent lookout for a week was at the head of the square, or common, past which, as a part of the material newness, ran well-patronized trolley lines on which you can go either to Lexington or to Boston, and also touch other points of interest. Though the town has a name which suggests harmony, it is in fact noted for a very positive individuality in its thinking. Each resident has apparently his own body of concepts—every person being, as Emerson said of his own sentences, “an infinitely repellent particle.”

When I remarked to a cultured friend, who is one of its citizens, of the soft mellowness in the new Unitarian church bell, he said it was trying to strike in harmony with all the other bells; but I ventured to say that Concord’s opinions may only be expressed by each of its inhabitants keeping and ringing a private bell of his own. The church in question, newly built to replace the old one destroyed three years ago by fire, and intended to be a replica of that, and containing the Emerson family pew, is really a beautiful edifice without and within.

The calm circuiting of the Concord River, the lakes (of which Walden is the chief), the pine trees of the vicinage, and especially around Emer-

son's home and Walden, and the fine meadowy and tillable fields adjacent or near, were features that made themselves promptly noticed. No wonder is there that Emerson dealt so often and so rapturously in both his prose and verse with the pine tree. He could not take a walk in his yard or from his dooryard gate without hearing its Eolian tones.

There is one fiction disposed of for me by my visit. Whoever said that Emerson used to ring a dinner bell at the end of his garden as a call to Thoreau to come up from Walden to the midday repast, romanced worse than I had supposed. For no dinner bell has so extended a call as the distance involved would require. Walden I found to be accurately named, as it is securely enveloped by the woods. You cannot look upon it from any point, though, without seeing how much it meant in joy and inspiration for him who has made it immortal. In his book about it, and his life on its shores, Thoreau speaks of cultivating a bean patch near by; but this could not have been very near, as beans do not prosper in umbrageous fields.

Although a considerable part of the woods between the highway and the lake have been felled in recent years, the surrounding woodsy frame has nowhere been entirely broken, or the original beauty of the place essentially changed. Speaking of frames, it may not have been far from here where Thoreau saw the landscape through "two near rocks." And he remarks: "What better frame

would you have? And the sky itself on its top." . . . He adds: "Such pictures cost nothing but eyes, and it will not bankrupt me to own them. They were not stolen by any conqueror as spoils of war, and none can doubt but they are really the works of an old master."

My visiting period was not marked for much notice of Thoreau, but the entire town calls him inevitably to mind. As I looked for hours from the Colonial Hotel veranda, squirrels could be often seen in the maples on the square, which are descendants, no doubt, of those which once knew the naturalist of Walden. They seemed, at any rate, to hold in their philosophy no particular fear of the Concord observers and visitors. One night, too, in these trees sounded out distinctly the unmistakable voice of a screech owl. And it happened the day after I had been reading this note of Thoreau's in his "Autumn" volume:

"September 23, 1855, 8 P. M.

"I hear from my chamber a screech owl about Monroe's house, this bright moonlight night—a loud, piercing scream, much like the whinny of a colt, perhaps a rapid trill, then subdued or smothered a note or two."

On another occasion, he says in this book:

"The hooting of the owl—that is a sound that my red predecessors heard here more than a thousand

years ago. It rings far and wide, occupying the space rightfully; grand, primeval, aboriginal sound. There is no whisper in it of the Bulkleys, the Flints, the Hosmers, who recently squatted here, nor of the first parish, nor of Concord fight, nor of the last town meeting."

The hotel in which my chamber was and from which I heard the owl, is made up of three consolidated cottages, one of which was once Thoreau's residence. How he loved the village and its surroundings all his books attest. He says in the one before me:

"I have never gotten over my surprise that I should have been born into the most estimable place in all the world, and in the very nick of time, too."

What could be seen anywhere, even the red snow of the Arctic circle, he always claimed could be found in Concord.

Carefully as the Concord people have attended to marking the famous sites and historic spots that are numerous there, something more might be done in this way on behalf of Thoreau. The cairn, which visitors have piled up on the supposed site of his cabin, is several rods distant from the exact spot the cabin occupied, which is itself unmarked. There is danger that in time this spot will not be known. Why should there not be some simple shaft put there, or a replica of the hut itself? One would like, too, to have some record somewhere, that could be referred to, of the places owned by the

Minots and Hosmers and others, to whom Thoreau so often referred, and of Clamshell Bend, Lee's Cliff, Grape Cliff, Great Meadows, and so forth, a knowledge of which makes the reading of his note-books so much more vital. Even the "Old Marlboro Road" might have a signboard for the hurried traveler, who would like to know it as he is driving along.

Concord drew its original fame, of course, from the revolutionary battle in close conjunction with that of Lexington; but this, notwithstanding Emerson's highly preservative song of "the embattled farmers" who "fired the shot heard round the world," has now been so opulently enlarged that its triumphs of thinking heavily overlay its worthy triumph of action. The world surely will not forget the minute men who so promptly took up arms against rising and unjustifiable oppression; but it sees also, among the material monuments of that defense, the Mecca unparalleled for thoughtful minds. In its Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, a God's Acre of wonderful natural charm, are the graves of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Alcott, Channing and others, without whose work of liberation and enlightenment our country would have been poor indeed. They were not, to be sure, without worthy colleagues elsewhere; but what one town—and that town a comparatively small one—has done so much for wholesome delight and the enrichment of human thought as this? The particular names

singled for mention are nearly all in closely allied resting places here, on a ridge upon which they occupy only a line of a few rod's space.

A little girl of eleven at the cemetery gateway, who had informed herself well, offered to be the *cicerone* to our company of five or six for a very few pennies—which sum we enlarged—and we gratefully accepted her services. She took us by the briefest route to each important grave. Pointing first to an oak tree on the highway border, which looked as if it had strayed from Windsor Forest, she said, "That oak is four hundred years old," which was not hard to believe. For an acorn planted by Christopher Columbus in 1492 could hardly have produced an oak looking more wrinkled and venerable. We reached first the grave of Louisa M. Alcott, which is not near her father's, and which is noticeable for its extremely small gravestone, hardly larger than a footstone. Hawthorne's only is so small among those bearing eminent names. That is a mere crescent of marble, seeming not a foot in height, and bearing simply the word

HAWTHORNE.

At Emerson's grave the little girl told us the rough boulder which stands there "is rose quartz," calling attention to its roseate patched color. She added, "It was Emerson's favorite stone."

In the village, the homes these authors once owned or tenanted are eagerly looked upon by the visitor. Emerson's is the most beautiful; but the Old Manse, the Orchard House, the Wayside, and the Thoreau and Alcott places, which are various, have a look of distinction that matches well their history. I saw by a kind courtesy the library, books, and equipment with which Emerson worked, and his beautiful outlook and surroundings, but they seem to call for a silent reserve rather than for description or comment. In the Antiquarian Society's building I was asked to register, and I did so with a pen dipped in Hawthorne's ink well. I could dip out my name easily enough, but the magic he drew from it there is no one left now to evoke.

The building is itself a well-preserved specimen of antiquity, as is also Wright Tavern, of the date of 1747, which is near it, and of which there is abundant old-time gossip. In the Antiquarian building are kept large assortments of everything, old and historic—utensils of peace, as well as of war, furniture, tokens that tell tales and strange miscellanies that report graphically the past. Very interesting among them is the group of furniture standing apart in an upper chamber which Thoreau used in his Walden cabin. Supremely plain it is, and not beyond the power of a tyro in carpentry to have made. The desk and bed—the bed on which he finally died—he probably did devise, for they do not seem to recall any mercantile or store

pattern. There was also a quaint blue cupboard there, with upper and lower doors, and of primitive shape, that was in Thoreau's village home. He said fifty years ago that he hated "the present modes of getting a living. Farming and shopkeeping and working at a trade or profession are all odious to me." He preferred "getting his living in a simple, primitive fashion." At Walden he had nearly all the time there was for study and for writing.

This was the philosophy of his two years' hermitage. "I make it my business," he says, "to extract from Nature whatever nutriment she can furnish me, though at the risk of endless iteration. I milk the sky and earth." His intimacy and close communion with Nature he a hundred times avers. "I see not a dead eel or floating snake or a gull but it sounds my life, and is like a line or accent in its poem. Almost I believe the Concord would not arise and overflow its banks again were I not here." That last sentence made me wish I had not neglected a long ago tempting invitation, and had seen it overflow or at least flow on in its broad, reposeful, ribbony way, when he and the Concord group were alive in the charming village.

One sometimes wonders if, in a town transfigured by high thinking, the very least intelligence of the place may not somehow be lifted up by the influence of it. I was watching one day a friendly dog ambling on the sidewalk there, and I queried

whether he knew more than individuals of his kind elsewhere. It seems Thoreau had some such thought as this, one brilliant October, and records it thus:

"I saw a terrier dog glance up and down the painted street before he turned in at his master's gate, and I wondered what he thought of these lit trees, if they did not touch his philosophy or spirits; but I fear he had only his common doggish thoughts after all. He trotted down the road as if it were a matter of course, or else as if he deserved it all."

I spoke with people in Concord who knew Thoreau, and who put a version upon his popularly supposed chronic aloofness that should be better understood. There were persons, probably, who carried with them what he knew beforehand would bring a chemic antagonism to the thoughts he entertained. Charles Lamb says, in speaking of imperfect sympathies, that he can readily believe that there may be two persons in the world who, on meeting for the first time, may find themselves so utterly antagonistic to each other that they will proceed at once to fight. Thoreau had the instinct to scent this danger and the skill to avoid it, and that was all. I was told that he was naturally sociable and liked to talk with the majority of those whom he met, and that certain of his neighbors he had a special love and admiration for.

At any rate, he looked at the world and society from a new platform. He stripped the panorama

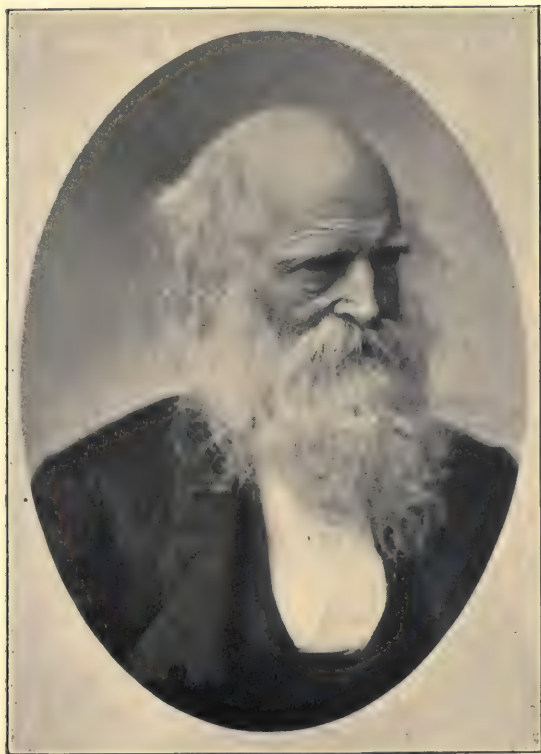
going on about us, of business as well as of manners, of all its conventions and artifice; and he took life as nearly as he could on primitive terms. No one would ask—and least of all did he—that society should take to the woods. Probably they would contaminate the woods, if they did, without improving themselves to any sensible degree. But society might find a tonic in reading Thoreau, and seeing more clearly than was ever suggested to them in what real living and the needs of the spirit consist.

If this liberal discourse on Thoreau seems to exaggerate him in the perspective, the fact that he alone of the so-called Concord group of authors was a native of the town may possibly justify me. But there is still another condoning circumstance: the authors who adopted Concord have been read by all classes, while Thoreau's audience is still special and select.

When I put my hands in the soft waters of Walden Pond, there were children there splashing in it by the shore near the memorial cairn. Birds were in the trees, and the water weeds and minnows were in plain sight. Midsummer had touched everything around its silver surface with a green and growing delight. I left it with the children's voices and the splashed and rippled water as the last remembrance.

BRYANT, THE POET.

FEW men in the ranks of literature find a straight road leading them forward; but few have had a smoother or easier career altogether than the one which fell to William Cullen Bryant. He began to write when there was almost no American literary voice to divide attention with him, and when a poet—one of undeniable strain—became at once a phenomenon, and filled a waiting, if not a crying, need. Washington Irving had a somewhat similar start as essayist and humorist, reaping the same benefit from it that Bryant had as a poet. That Irving was afterwards mindful of this superiority of position is evident from a remark which he made to Mr. Curtis, late in life. "We old fellows," he said in substance, "have a great advantage over you who are writing now. We had a free field, without your numerous competitors." It is quite likely that Bryant also came to know and appreciate how great this advantage was. Of course, Irving's suggestion was made playfully, or in terms of levity, but its obviousness is not thereby diminished. Just think of the time, if you can, when Barlow's "Colum-



W. C. BRYANT.

biad" and the epic of "Hasty Pudding" could be thought important contributions. And, later on, a little spark of fire went certainly very far when Mrs. Sigourney was considered a great poet; when virtue and amiability posing in blank verse were able to produce a great reputation. Bryant survives because his gift was striking and real, and not mediocre; and his genius remains distinguished in a later and more critical time.

Observe in comparison, the adversely significant literary opportunity now. To write something to-day that shall attract general attention is something like trying to make your voice heard in the bedlam of the New York Stock Exchange. Say as good or wise a thing now as you may, in prose or verse, and it is at once overwhelmed by an oceanic tumult of competing voices. In the earlier day, the good thing said fell upon a waiting and not wearied circle, like the single voice in a peaceful Quaker meeting.

But the good fairies, when they surrounded Bryant's cradle, gave him also other gifts than his early birthday. They gave him a workable measure of health and long life. He had the good sense and balanced judgment afterwards to work his vein of inspiration under conditions most favorable to it. His Pegasus did not go to mill or to market, nor was it made to do every-day chores. If he lived by a business somewhat related to the muse, he kept the muse groomed, so to speak, in a

separate stall. It was only taken out for use on rare and choice occasions.

When you come to look at the full body of Bryant's verse, as it was collected a few years ago by his son-in-law, Parke Godwin, with all the new and unpublished pieces and fragments added to those so well known, you see that it is not a large bulk. If Swinburne should live to Bryant's age, and go on with his present pace of fecundity, a long library shelf will be needed to hold his poems. But Bryant's verse, though displayed here by aid of very coarse type and broad margins, in over two volumes, could easily be printed in one, and that one you could easily carry in your pocket.

In his sense of the value of reticence, condensation, and brevity, Bryant takes a deservedly high rank. He is a rare model for young and aspiring writers in this respect. The toil and moil which he bestowed on his pieces, too, when he sat down to write, were no doubt very great. He finished and polished his lines to the last degree. By writing seldom, he had something of weight to offer. It would not have been his way, if he could have done it, to drop an airy and sinuous rondeau, or tripping triolets on paper, over a vacuous conceit. His messages were grave and stern. His style is essentially ponderous, though free from blemish. It used to be said of him, long ago, that he would often wait for weeks to find a single adjective, and in the meantime, carry around in his pocket the

poem, all finished, except the one blank which that adjective was necessary to fill. When his muse whispered to him the vacant vocable, he hastened to obey her command; and the poetical torso was then lifted from its private pedestal into public view. But not until then. It is the fault of the modern bard and of the young writer that he swiftly rushes into print. He does not remember that Holmes likens poetry to wine. Neither should be dispensed while the rage of youth remains. They should both be kept a long time for ripening and rectification. Hazardous above all things is it to bind up either as a permanent possession while faults remain. The cask of wine is apt to burst with havoc when so treated, and the bound book of unripened rhyme may easily explode what would, with other treatment, have made a memorable reputation.

In Bryant's poem of "The Poet," he distinctly and rightly announces the serious matter which it really is to be responsible for a poem. He says,—

"Deem not the framing of a deathless lay
The pastime of a drowsy summer day."

You must have experience and time, he adds, and make yourself a part of your theme. You must "gather all your powers" before you "wreak them" in verse. You must brood at morn and eve, and be inspired by "wonder and delight." When the line, after all, seems harsh or crude, you

must go back and retouch it "with fear." How easily we can all indorse this! It is the whole truth of the matter. How naturally, in the hour of trial and temptation, we slip away from it! But there is no doubt our author stood sternly by his rules. He once suppressed four lines of a poem on account of a trivial criticism of them by Christopher North; and, his editor says, he made several ineffectual attempts to improve an identical rhyme in the third stanza of his poem of "The Evening Wind." He even omitted one entire stanza no less perfect than the rest—which is still preserved in some collections—on account of its digression from the orderly sequence of the main thought.

Bryant is in many ways truly a master. One reads his most noted pieces with great relish and admiration. When they indulge simply in depicting nature, they are especially delightful, and have become classic. All his verse is pure and lofty in tone, majestic in manner, and melodious. If the melody is more the result of skill and art than the prompting of passion, it is melody none the less. If his poetry is sombre, it breathes always a most wholesome strain. If he has made some errors of detail, as John Burroughs has shown, in his minute reading of Nature, he at least expounds her larger lessons felicitously. He is so felicitous, indeed, in his general perspective that I have found the arrival of a month or period quite often sug-

gests to me his poetical embodiment of it. For years I have never been able to go into the August fields, for a walk, without consciously repeating to myself certain verses of his, entitled "A Summer Ramble." The stanzas which so imprint themselves are these:—

"The quiet August noon has come;
A slumberous silence fills the sky.
The fields are still, the woods are dumb,
In glassy sleep the waters lie.

"And mark yon soft white clouds that rest
Above our vale, a moveless throng;
The cattle on the mountain's breast
Enjoy the grateful shadow long.

"Ah, how unlike those merry hours
In early June, when earth laughs out;
When the fresh winds make love to flowers,
And woodlands sing and waters shout!

"When in the grass sweet voices talk,
And strains of tiny music swell
From every moss-cup of the rock,
From every nameless blossom's bell.

"But now a joy too deep for sound,
A peace no other season knows,
Hushes the heavens and wraps the ground,
The blessing of supreme repose."

A similar association is apt to rule one, too, with respect to the fringed gentian, and the distant bird which takes far on in the remote horizon its "solitary way." The particular poems which the flower

and bird recall, and a few others that he wrote in like manner, are, in fact, cabinet pictures that have in them, with much perspective and color, the truths of photography clearly lined. Bryant's verse, whatever may be lacking in it, has the virtue of speaking directly to the point. There is no haze or mystery in his lines. He offers no involution of words. His thought is clear, and it gives you no puzzles or riddles to solve. An illiterate auditor knows just what he means; and when a public speaker quotes the well-known quotation below, it goes so straight to the mark:—

“Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,—
The eternal years of God are hers;
But Error, wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies among his worshippers.”

The measures of the eighteenth century and the lines of Pope and Dryden were dominant when Bryant began to write, and in the main fixed his mould and style. But he improved upon and enlarged this equipment. The feeling for nature which inspired Wordsworth and Cowper was his conspicuous endowment; and it came to tired ears with messages as fresh as the winds and flowers of the fields. It must have been a relief to those who were jaded with Pope's mechanical hurdy-gurdy music to have caught the new pulse and woodsy breath of “Thanatopsis.” I suppose we cannot now quite understand what an advance note that

early poem struck in this voiceless western hemisphere, when it appeared. And it brought the added wonder that it was written by a boy. The wisdom of the octogenarian was deftly distilled in verses written at eighteen. It is not strange that the writer of it was at once foredoomed to fame.

It is one of the most striking facts with reference to Bryant's muse that it was born, like Minerva, mature. There is really no boyhood in it, and but little passion. He never "threw a poem"—in Alexander Smith's coveted manner—"like a comet out," for there was little heat in his blood. His May days "shed an amber light." Coolness and restraint preside over his lyre. The solemn song of death with which he began, and which he never disposed of, is every bit as perfect as the last piece of blank verse he ever wrote; nor, in middle life, did he ever get above it. His early poem set the key-note to his thought, which is almost invariably solemn and sermon-like.

It is very curious how the note of joy is suppressed, or simply made a foil for the juxtaposition and climax of sombre reflection, by Bryant. Very few of his pieces are wholly joyous. They are, on the contrary, eminently didactic and moral. They have—and I trust it will not be too great a heresy to say it—the faults of their eminent virtues. In the poem of the bobolink ("Robert of Lincoln"), the strain is lively because the subject itself excludes everything but life and joy. In "The Plant-

ing of the Apple-tree," it is only partially joyous; for the solemn passing of the years is emphasized:—

"The years shall come and pass, but we
Shall hear no longer where we lie
The summer's songs, the autumn's sigh,
In the boughs of the apple-tree.

And time shall waste this apple-tree."

In the final stanza, an aged man moralizes to the children about the apple-tree's history.

One cannot deny the worth of a good moral, or the frequent beauty with which Bryant invests one. But is not the more elusive and delicate charm of verse seriously injured by too much straightforward didacticism? "Beauty is" not only "its own excuse for being": it may be trusted, too, to draw its own inference. The *Haec fabula docet* does well enough for Æsop; but, appearing as the unfailing sequel of a series of poems, it somehow detracts from their natural power to enchant. But the same moral pointer which was so conspicuous in "Thanatopsis" becomes afterwards the rule of his work. In the midst of the cerulean bloom of "The Fringed Gentian," even the last stanza is a prayerful monition. The serene beauty of the poem "To a Waterfowl" ends with a specific "lesson." "The Yellow Violet" does not quite escape one; for it contains a regret for "aping the ways of pride." It would take too much space to note

this trait wherever it occurs; and yet the epicedial element overshadows it. The poem of "A Dream" is marked by his faultless rhyme and measure; but it opens with spring and birds and young blossoms, only to pass on to "black hearses," "burial-grounds," and "monumental stones." At the end we are directly told to "note its lessons." That this habit was more the fashion of literature in his early days may be admitted; but it is a serious question whether this trait will not help to impair the permanence of poetry imbued with it.

The sepuchral flavor as well as the moralized sequel is surprising in Bryant's verse. In his "Walk at Sunset," he stands upon the ashes of the red man; and, in his much admired poem of "The Prairies," the passing away of the mound-builders and the red man's later demise are made conspicuous. Apart from specific poems on burial-places, and one on "A Child's Funeral," and "The Conqueror's Grave," this flavor is brought in, as the obvious and natural waft from the breath of nature and the spirit, in innumerable places. Iteration and reiteration are wrought on this one strain. You find a "Hymn to Death," and a little further on "The Old Man's Funeral." Other titles savoring of the crypt also are "Mizpah," "The Two Graves," "The Disinterred Warrior," "The Knight's Epitaph," "The Murdered Traveller," and "The Massacre at Scio," and,—it would be wearisome to name them all.

These idyls of grief are certainly majestic and beautiful; and "The Conqueror's Grave," which appeared originally in *Putnam's Monthly*, is tender and touching in the extreme. I am not sure but that it is the best poem that Bryant ever wrote, though many of his earlier ones surpass it in the mere matter of celebrity. Every one can recall, without effort, the graceful, pensive beauty of his thousand-times copied poem of "The Death of the Flowers." It has sometimes been titled "The Close of Autumn"; and for many years no autumn ever came to its close without the appearance of this piece in nearly every newspaper "Poet's Corner" in the land. There is such a thing, of course, as a sweet, chastening melancholy; and it exists in this poem, if anywhere. It rolled here out of one side of the heart of nature. It expresses, at least, a phase of the year's departure and decay. But it was not enough for Bryant to consider the passing away of the flowers simply, although he had finished a very unique and happy poem without the last stanza. He adds the last stanza, however, to bring in human death, and devotes it to "one who in her youthful beauty died."

I once said I would turn to certain titles in Bryant's volumes where death and the grave are not suggested; but I found their imagery in the verse. You would say that the poem of "June" will of necessity be joyous, for it is the month which marks the high career of the bobolink, out of

which Bryant did extract joy. But we do not read the third line of it before we find the cavernous ground opened under our feet, and the sexton and what belongs with him follows. I admire, I think, as much as any one can, its rare beauty. It contains, in fact, some very memorable lines,—particularly where it refers to one (and to himself now, since he had his wish expressed in it, and was buried in June)

“Whose part in all the pomp that fills
The circuit of the summer hills
Is that his grave is green.”

But the question which obtrudes itself is whether so much of the charnel-house at all times and seasons is not a serious defect in poetry. For poetry, primarily, is for our comfort and delight. Will the noblest thought even, and the perfection of rhythm and rhyme, make the atmosphere of the graveyard permanently dear and popular? We cannot escape its stern facts, to be sure; but we must of necessity put them out of sight in our ordinary moods. There are times when we cannot; but Goethe's maxim, *Gedenke Leben* (“Think of living”) is the mandate universally obeyed. In fact, life could not go on if it were not. Tennyson says,—

“Every minute dies a man,
Every minute one is born,”—

which, though it is an extreme understatement of the actual fact, allows to life the parity of an equation. But the real truth is that life is on the majority side, and on the perpetual increase. True and impressive as the fate is which terminates existence, the normal spectacle in this world at any time is its overwhelming, streaming life and activ-

But death is the morbid apparition with which Bryant toys. In his poem of "The Waning Moon" he makes use of the illustration connected with its death from the sky to say,—

"In thy decaying beam there lies
Full many a grave on hill and plain,
Of those who closed their dying eyes
In grief that they had lived in vain."

Why could he not have relieved the darkness here just a little, by bringing to view a few rounded hillocks touched by this moon where life had ended otherwise than sadly? Usually, he does as much as this, or discovers a compensatory chord to put with his grief. He does this in a sonnet written to a near friend who is dying of consumption. But this would be a most extraordinary poem to address to a friend to-day. It opens thus:—

"Ay, thou art for the grave; thy glances shine
Too brightly to shine long;
The fields for thee have no medicinal leaf,
And the vexed ore no mineral of power;
And they who love thee wait in anxious grief,
Till the slow plague shall bring the fatal hour."

The poem of "Tree Burial" might suggest, from its title, a possible celebration of Arbor Day; but it is not dithyrambic at all. It is an elaborate description in blank verse of the burial of an Indian child in the forest. A very pretty and characteristic "Legend of the Delawares" commemorates the consternation caused to this tribe by the death by lightning of Onetho, a young and cherished warrior. The sonnet to "October" has its climax in a wish to

"Pass silently from men, as thou dost pass."

"The Hunter's Vision" and "The Strange Lady" are based upon death and the grave, a double death occurring in the former. In his delightful fairy tale of "Sella," which recalls the story of Undine, and which is longer even than "The Ages," he postpones the death of the maiden for a hundred years, but the shadow of it impends. At length,—

"Where she was born they reared her monument,

The stone engraved with Sella's honored name."

In "The Little People of the Snow," Eva's burial and grave are the striking points in the poem. In the exquisitely finished poem of "The Snow Shower," it is the grave which the flakes find in the water, and the similarly frequent dispensation of human death, around which it turns. Few

are his verses into which this underground atmosphere does not find its way. It will be remembered that, when "Thanatopsis" was published in the *North American Review*, a brief poem of four stanzas, which happened to be folded in with the manuscript, was published with it as a prefatory portion. It was, in fact, another poem of death, mainly describing its terrors.

I do not forget for a moment that I am commenting upon poetry that has signalized for two generations the high-water mark of American literature. It has won its way by supreme excellence into the mental and spiritual consciousness of all lovers of the poet's art. But to discourse of certain spots on the sun's disk will not put out its light. There is no genius so great that we cannot read through its illumination something greater. Must one be presumptuous to say that, if all Shakespeare's poems and dramas were as ghastly and terrible as "Titus Andronicus," his fame and readableness would have been long ago sensibly impaired?

"Set not thy foot on graves," says Emerson. Let there be a time for grief, but let it not be all the time. We find no fault with the beauty and fragrance of the tuberose, but we reserve its use for one occasion. A friend of mine uttered only a common sentiment when he said that a picture like Peale's "Court of Death" is not one he should like to dwell with day by day. I cannot see why

the association which affects a flower or a picture will not somehow impair the excellence of a poem. And what if it is so overpowering as to throw a pall and the funeral ceremonies over the whole body of a poet's verse?

I can imagine that some one here may triumphantly refer me to Gray's "Elegy" and to Tennyson's "In Memoriam." But these are essentially episodes. Neither repeats the whole genius of its author. Poems like these, whether I am able in a few words to make the fact clear or not, have so much to offer in the way of subtle thought and human philosophy, as well as in the setting forth of nature, that their obituary quality is not so much the end and chief concern. They, at any rate, idealize the subject as Bryant either could not or did not. They do not rest in its bold anatomy and presentment, and they skip the ever-recurring categorical moral. I am sure that neither of these poems, nor the "Lycidas" of Milton, nor the "Threnody" of Emerson, nor the "Thyrsis" of Matthew Arnold gives death in that blank nudity which brings terror or disenchantment.

I suppose that, while some part of the solemn tendency in Bryant's mind was a matter of temperament, not a little was owing to the fact that he (without being a Calvinist) imbibed that strong influence in youth with which the genius of Jonathan Edwards was able to darken the hills of Western Massachusetts, and which rested like a nightmare

on the minds of the last century. The dolefulness of that philosophy, lived with and believed in, is simply inconceivable now.

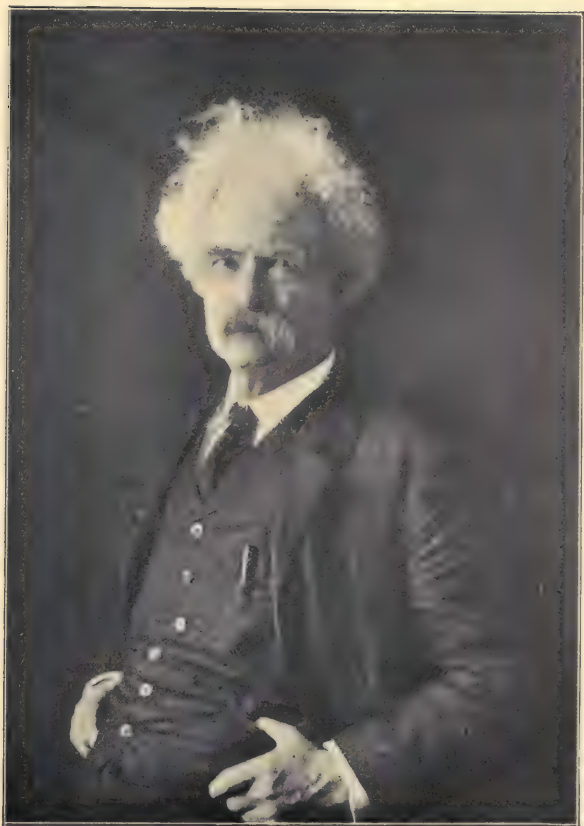
One must concede a beautiful symmetry and nearly absolute perfection of form to Bryant's poetry; and yet one feels that his very best work was not spontaneous. It lacks more than anything else natural fluency and spontaneity. A poem does not burst forth from Bryant's muse irrepressibly, like a fountain. It was with him the representative of a very slow and serious struggle. For occasional poems, he often confessed that he had no gift. Few have the gift of being able to produce them as Holmes possessed it; but we can think of no writer in which toil to attain an end is so marked as it is in Bryant. His most seamless verses, and where the art is certainly perfect, are apt to show you how they were put together. There does not seem to be that *inevitableness* about them which Matthew Arnold finds in Wordsworth. I often wonder why rhymes so perfect, and rhythm so melodious, and thought so elevated do not affect me more in certain poems of Bryant's. Perhaps it is because they are not inevitable. They are made with as little blemish as is seen in matched mosaic, but they are put together like matched mosaic. He worked somehow with a hard rather than a fluent and ductile medium. Instead of blending ethereal tints, he placed a vitreous glazing or marble in order. You find

no flagrancy to condemn, but you miss the last and most exquisite charm which Wordsworth and Keats and Shelley so often commanded. It would be thought that Bryant's qualities would at least have conspired to make a perfect sonnet; but he did not like that form of verse, and has written nothing in it that is remarkable. He confesses that his sonnets are simply poems that happen to be fourteen lines long.

We cannot describe the secret of style and charm united; but we know that intellectual strength, or genius even, alone, is not sufficient for their attainment. The personal equation is needed to produce that ineffable quality that marks, in their separate ways, the work of such writers as Hawthorne and Matthew Arnold. That Bryant communicated grace and charm I have not denied, and should not like to deny; but he did not communicate them fluently or in the highest degree. There are pieces and fragments of his work that will be quoted, I am sure, always. There are lines of his in which phrase and epithet seem to answer every demand. Who has not, indeed, been deeply indebted to him, if he reads poetry at all, for an immense contribution to his pleasure? He did not write long poems, and the longest that he did write are not his best. His muse in its longer flights, while it was just as smooth and capable as in the briefer lyrics, somehow puts itself out of breath.

With so much austerity there was a lack of per-

colating and suffusing geniality,—a lack of the sense of humor. Bryant, as a writer, had no touch of humor, either in its resolved or ebullient form. All his utterance is marked by a persistent, dry seriousness. That nameless something which flashes out like heat-lightning, which Addison and Goldsmith had, which is seen in the sunnier passages of Cowper's letters,—not to speak of the quality of such pronounced humorists as Charles Lamb and Holmes,—he did not possess. He cannot melt your mind to his, or fascinate you; but, inspiring admiration, he throws around his themes an awful stateliness and solitude. With the life of spontaneity absent, and rarely offering an unclouded rapture, the beauty he evokes is like the crystal glory and grandeur of the iceberg. But, if Chimborazo is not so broad and high as Dhawalagiri, it is still very broad and high. If it does not bear the flowers of Asia, are there not others which we can enjoy? Why, it may be asked, should we be captious or querulous in the presence of so considerable—in some respects, so unprecedented—a gift?



MARK TWAIN.

SOME AMERICAN HUMORISTS.

IT was said by Selden that men merely get material to work with by their learning, but their wit and wisdom are born with them. Sydney Smith, who certainly knew a good deal about wit and wisdom, believed that all the great poets, orators, and statesmen have been witty, on occasions, among whom he mentioned Cæsar, Alexander, Aristotle, Descartes, Lord Bacon, Cicero, Socrates, Shakespeare, and of course, Dr. Johnson.

An instance of occasional wit as good as any happened in a little passage in the House of Lords in the time of Queen Anne, when Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, in speaking on a certain bill that he did not like, said he had months ago prophesied its appearance "at this session," and "was sorry to find he had proved a true prophet." Lord Coningsby, who had the floor next, remarked "if this was so, he did not know what prophet to liken him to, unless to that furious prophet Balaam who was reprov'd by his own ass." This observation gave Atterbury his chance, which he improved as follows: "Since the noble

Lord has discovered in our manners such a similitude, I am well content to be compared to the prophet Balaam, but, my Lords, I am at a loss how to make out the other part of the parallel; I am sure I have been reprov'd by nobody but his Lordship!"

Wit and humor, strictly speaking, are, of course, separately defined, but, like literature and journalism, they often overlap each other's domain. Those whom we call humorists, in general parlance, are really wits who purvey both wit and humor. The real humorist, however, like Charles Lamb, furnishes matter that outlasts its day—while the writer who is a professional wit has merely his fashion and season. I was once talking with Horace Greeley about "Doesticks" (Mortimer Thompson) when that humorist was prominent, and he said he will be good for a time, but all our American humorists go by, for others to follow. Not one of them lasts.

The first American humorist having a national celebrity among us was not born in the United States, but in Nova Scotia. This writer was "Sam Slick" (Judge Haliburton), whose personification of the Yankee, practically fixed the Yankee type, and who was the favorite of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers. His account of his visit to New York as a rustic, forgetting on one occasion some doughnuts that had been carefully wrapped in his handkerchief, which tumbled out of it on the

parlor floor on a party occasion, with many other mishaps, and his unsophisticated descriptions, were all excellent. But they would not pass muster now. Synchronously with the vogue of his books, or a little later perhaps, came to us from England "Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures" from the pen of Douglas Jerrold. These were not American, to be sure, but they were much read here. And about the same time with the currency of these flourished the Letters of "Major Jack Downing."

You can sometimes see the books of these writers in the old book stores, but they are practically as dead now as the bonnets and other costumes of their time. Middle-aged people still living remember well when "Mrs. Partington" (B. P. Shillaber), and a little later "Fanny Fern" wrote spicy paragraphs that went the entire rounds of the press, as the *Danbury News* man's witticisms did in more recent days. There was no country or city newspaper that was without them in almost every issue. But you never see them now. Then there was at one time Lieutenant Derby of "Phoenixiana" fame. All of us who were of his era remember his famous fight with some antagonist in California, where he held his enemy fast on top of himself, valiantly inserting his nose in his victim's mouth, while his hand was employed in holding one of his victim's hands—an ironic victory of the under dog in this case. Curiously illustrated many of his jokes were, with antique newspaper type-

metal cuts such as were once seen in the initial lines of advertisements. Cuts of this sort of several houses put in a line—of the same style precisely in each instance—did duty for these various legends underneath: "Mansion of 'John Phœnix,'" "House in which Shakespeare was born," "Abbotsford, the residence of Sir Walter Scott," "The Capitol at Washington," etc. Strung along together, their monotonous primitive style had something like the effect of bad spelling upon witty epigrams. A ship, a woodcock, and a wooden pestle and mortar strung horizontally across the page or column did duty for "A view of the City of San Diego by Sir Benjamin West." An open oyster shell showing both parts, and a blacksmith's upturned arm and hammer illustrated the "Shell of an Oyster once eaten by General Washington, showing the General's manner of opening oysters."

John Phœnix's alleged paper was the *San Diego Herald*, of which he was only the editor *pro tem*. The following is given as a sample of his detached jokes in it, the most of his humor being too extended, as it is mainly in narrative form, for suitable quoting:

AN APT QUOTATION.—His Reverence, coming into the Colorado House last Sunday afternoon, was invited by the urbane proprietor to *irrigate*. Being in an arid state, he consented to take a glass of lemonade, but accidentally took a brandy cocktail which

had been mixed for Mr. Mariatowski, and drank it off without noticing his mistake. "Why, Doctor," said Frank, when he observed the disappearance of his sustenance, "that was my horn you drank." "Ah, my young friend," quoth the old man with a benevolent smile and a smack of his lips while the moisture stood on the inside of his venerable spectacles, "Ah, my young friend, *the horn of the ungodly shall be put down.*"—Psalm 75:10.

In his lectures on Astronomy he gave the following version of the Signs of the Zodiac:

1. Aries—The Hydraulic Ram.
2. Taurus—The Irish Bull.
3. Gemini—The Siamese Twins.
4. Cancer—The Soft Shell Crab.
5. Leo—The Dandy Lion.
6. Virgo—The Virago.
7. Libra—The Hay Scales.
8. Scorpio—The N. Y. Herald.
9. Sagittarius—The Sparrow.
10. Capricornicus—The Bishop.
11. Aquarius—The Decanter.
12. Pisces—The Sardines.

Mrs. Partington's jokes were mainly made of those verbal pitfalls that were of the Mrs. Malaprop order. She once said she had just received two presents: "A horse so spiritous it always went off upon a decanter," and "a Pollywog Bible with the Hypocrisy in it."

"Q. K. Philander Doesticks" was one of the long narrators, and was very effective in his descriptions of Running with the Machine of the Fire Department, Visiting Niagara, and Seeing

Barnum's Museum. In some of his descriptions he made frequent use of a character called "Damp-hool." At the Barnum's Museum Baby Show he said:

"I stepped up to a lady to ask the age of a baby which she had in her maternal arms, when I found myself instantly a centre of baby attraction—babies seemed to pitch into me from all directions—a baby poked its finger into my eye, a baby put sugar on my ruffled shirt, a baby daubed gruel on my white vest, a baby filled my kid glove with milk, a baby dropped something done up in a rag down my neck, and a baby of huge dimensions and unredeemed ugliness amused itself by filling my hat full of play-things which it appropriated from the weaker babies on either side. So that I found in that article of apparel a tin whistle, three dolls, a sugar house, a miniature Noah's Ark with all the animals, a rattle box, a hair brush and two india-rubber balls.

"Tried to get out of the muss, but a baby was pulling my coattails, and a four-year-old baby stood upon each foot, improving the pattern of my white pants by wiping his dirty hands thereon. I stepped back and knocked over a baby. I rushed forward and stepped on a baby. I leaped to one side and crushed a small baby in a pink dress. I sprung to the other and crushed a fat baby and its nurse against the wall. I tried to escape from the room, but tumbled over a baby—recovered my feet and started again, but babies got between my legs and tripped me downstairs, where I landed in an exhausted condition, which was by no means improved by a careless woman dropping her baby directly on my head from the fourth story."

"Major Jack Downing's" style was one representing a rustic character who posed as the friend and special confidant of General Jackson. Jackson, though President, was always called the "Gineral" in Downing's letters, which were full of the politics of their day. Seba Smith was the author of them, and they pretty nearly filled the whole humorous horizon when they were in the ascendancy. Particular favorites they were in cross-roads stores, and post offices, and in farmers' homes, although they were read everywhere. Contemporary with Downing was the celebrated coon hunter, backwoodsman and politician, Captain David Crockett, whose sayings were very widely quoted. It was said of him that when a treed coon saw him coming with his gun, the coon would say: "Don't shoot, Captain, I'll come right down"—so sure was his reputed aim. It was he who said:

"I'll leave this motto for others when I'm dead,
'Be sure you're right—and then go straight ahead.'"

"Petroleum V. Nasby" (D. R. Locke) absorbed much of the flavor and atmosphere of Downing and Crockett, though he gave to his matter the requisite latter-day style. The rusticity and environment that he chose were of a kindred sort with theirs, while his "swingin' round the circle" with Andrew Johnson disclosed a Presidential intimacy quite like that which Downing assumed and exploited with reference to Andrew

Jackson. Perhaps Nasby imbibed more; for there is nothing more whiskey-soaked in any writings that I now recall than the "Confederate Cross Roads" Postmaster's letters. The nearest approach to this saturation is in some of Dickens's portrayals, especially in his depiction of Sary Gamp, and the memorable, if mythical, Mrs. Harris. But what these women "worried down" was not whiskey, but rum and gin—when they felt "so disposed."

Mr. Locke, when I engaged him as a lecturer, was a man of very slight size and stature, timid before an audience from inexperience, and rather shy otherwise. I was asked by him, before he went on the stage, not to leave him for a minute, so conscious was he of coming stage fright. Probably he got over this agitation when lecturing had become as familiar to him as his pen was, and he certainly had got over his pale complexion, youthful looks and small size when he became for a time a New York editor on the *Mail and Express*. Perhaps he learned at last to be a speaker of acceptability, but at the outset of his career he simply read his address as feebly as a scared schoolboy reads his composition, and with as little inflection and effect. Its passability was only secured by having the brand of humor that characterized his printed letters.

The *Danbury News* man (James M. Bailey) seems to have gone into oblivion as completely as the humorists who preceded him, and yet it is less

easy to see why in his case. He was brimful of brightness, and he used the most lucid straightforward English in his jokes, which were usually brief, and of a single paragraph. He is so easy to quote from that a selection to show his quality can begin wherever you open his book. I give below a few of his jocosities:

"The boys can always tell a farmer who works according to books. He always plants his muskmelons near the fence.

A Bethel man discovered that a stranger he rescued from a watery grave was not a long-lost brother, but a party he owed three dollars and a half for turnips. The Bethel man retired in disgust.

A Danbury sport wears a ten-cent silver piece on his shirt bosom, and calls it a dime and pin, which it certainly is.

It takes years of careful training to convince a boy, who is taken sick on a Saturday, that there is not a screw loose somewhere in the universe.

Kate Stanton, in her lecture on "The Loves of Great Men," asserts that the planets revolve around the sun by the influence of love, like a child revolves about its parent. When the writer was a boy he used to revolve around his parent a good deal, and may have been incited thereto by love, but to an unprejudiced observer it looked powerfully like a trunkstrap."

In his essay on "The Hen" he writes as follows:

"When the subject of victuals is mentioned they are evidently listening. Throw a handful of corn into a ten-acre lot and every hen in the enclosure will get a dab at it. The last hen on the spot may not secure more than two kernels, but nothing in the hen's appearance will indicate that. It will step around with as much precision and gratitude as any in the flock, and wear the most pensive smile you ever saw. A hen will not eat everything it sees, but it will try to, and there isn't one of them on the face of this earth but that can tell you the taste of everything it has seen within a radius of a half mile of its house. It is only when a man has kicked at a hen and missed it that he begins to understand how thoroughly hollow and deceitful this world is; and it is a marvellous fact in this connection that he will miss the hen if he does kick at it, and misses if he don't."

Through work like this, with which the paper was filled, the *Danbury News* got a national if not an international reputation, and was for a while on every news-stand. Bailey's published books, if I remember rightly, are "England Seen Through a Car Window," and "Mr. Phillips's Goneness, a story;" and "Life in Danbury." He was said to be singularly unassuming and modest in his manners, much liked by those who knew him; and I think, did not enter the lecture field—even if he spoke casually, or at all.

Washington Irving, Joseph C. Neal, and Lewis and Willis Gaylord Clarke must be set down as humorists, and later than their time came Orpheus C. Kerr, Bill Nye, M. Quad, and Bill Arp. M. Quad and Max Adeler still live, I be-

lieve, but have rather outlived their vocation. Many others have come and gone, each a slightly different type of the broad humor that we call American. To signal them all with an exhibition of their separate work would transcend the space to which this article is limited. Eugene Field and Whitcomb Riley are poet humorists mainly, Field employing prose somewhat—and George Ade, and Mr. Dunne, of Dooley fame, are our newest types.

One other name, which is perhaps that of a wit or wag journalist, is that of Artemus Ward. For absolutely spontaneous humor, native and not merely manufactured, abundant, and hilarious, Ward would seem to stand easily in the front rank. He even looked witty, while many of the humorous writers look sedate and serious. He could put on a solemn face on occasions when he needed solemnity for a background, but his ordinary appearance, I am told, was that of a person full of bottled fun and laughs which were always ready to materialize. He had a peculiar Roman nose, blue or greyish eyes, a somewhat lanky form, like a smaller patterned Abraham Lincoln, and an easy circus way of employing his arms and legs. But he was hollow-chested, and marked for consumption.

He did not save his fun for his articles and lectures exclusively; he scattered it along the street and wherever he went, or was, in company. If you walked with him he would sometimes put on

such antics, with boisterous shouting, that you had to explain to people whom you chanced to meet that you were not the custodian of a lunatic. When he lectured in Poughkeepsie, in 1865, he took with him on the stage, and let loose in the hall, a number of live mice, which scampered in all directions, causing, of course, a great tumult on the front seats, and consternation among the ladies who were present. But he was as sober at that moment, a friend assures me, as a judge, and apparently unconscious of the excitement he purposely prepared.

His topic on this occasion was "Mormonism," and the unique manner of the lecturer, and his bizarre treatment of his theme, it is sufficient to say, kept the audience thoroughly amused. Even the women forgot all about the mice. Among his remarks to elucidate the subject are these:

"Brigham Young's religion is singular, but his wives are plural. He is a kind husband, and a numerous father. The pretty girls in Utah mostly marry Young.

The Great Salt Lake is an inland sea of brine. There are no boats on this Lake, but a Mormon lives near by who says he has a whole raft of wives."

On the programme of the lecture are several of his characteristics sayings, of which the following are samples:

"Children in arms not admitted, if the arms are loaded.

Children under one year of age not admitted unless accompanied by their parents or guardians.

The manager will not be responsible for any debts of his own contracting."

On the lecturer's trip by boat to Newburgh, he carried a box twelve or fourteen feet long, but not over six or eight inches wide, marked "Artemus Ward—His Valise." On his Newburgh programme the following notice appears:

"Those of the audience who do not feel offended with Artemus Ward are cordially invited to call upon him often, at his fine new residence in Newburgh. His house is on the right hand side, as you cross the ferry, and may be easily distinguished from the other houses by its having a cupola and a mortgage on it."

Josh Billings (Henry W. Shaw) was always what would be called a dry or droll character, but he had nearly reached middle life before he became a public purveyor of witticisms. At first he wrote his shrewd epigrams correctly spelled for the Poughkeepsie *Daily Press*, and for a weekly paper in the same city called *The Poughkeepsian*. Having a real estate and auctioneer's office in that city his pen work was originally done as a sort of recreation. His local nom de plume at the outset was "Si Sledlength." Feeling an impulse at last for a connection with the larger public, he hit upon his cacography to arrest the attention he coveted. The scheme worked well; for he no sooner played

the prank of illiteracy than he tasted the sweets and glory of notoriety.

The papers everywhere copied his sayings, and city journals offered him very soon liberal pay for his writings. By the establishment of an *Almanac*, to be published each year, he reissued his witty sentences in a way that resulted in great financial gain, and turned his avocation to a durable vocation. His vogue was during the Civil War, and for a long time after, but when affairs were sorrowful at Washington, his humor came as a solace to Abraham Lincoln. It is known that Lincoln used to read his famous essay on "The Mule," or quote from it in the meetings of his Cabinet, in spite of Stanton's firm dislike of such levity. When the humorist says that "if you want to find a mule in the lot you must turn him in the next one to it," and that he had "known a mule to be good for six months just to get a chance to kick some one," he put forth a fruit of experience that no one could better appreciate and enjoy than Lincoln could.

He also said: "I like to see a man just as honest when he is measuring a peck of onions as when he is shouting 'Glory Hallelujah!'" And again: "Some men brag of their great descent, when their great descent is just what ails them." It will be noticed that his bad spelling, which I omit, is not a part of his wit, but only an accessory to, or advertisement of it. At Hamilton College, where

he was a student, stories of his youthful pranks have been told. He entered the Freshman class in 1833, and had he remained would have graduated in 1837. But he was in college only one year. Professor Edward North, who remembered him, wrote me some years ago (1890) as follows in reference to him: "He distinguished himself in college by his trick of climbing the lightning-rod on the spire of the Chapel. Others tried to follow his example, and this perilous sport was stopped by covering the lightning-rod with a row of long spikes pointing downward where it rests on a projection of the stone steeple. The spikes are there to-day (1890), and are a striking memorial of the college eccentricities of Henry W. Shaw."

His career is worthy of more honor than it has thus far received. He was a man of rare good sense, with a decided genius for teaching wholesome truths by epigram. He made the world better by his picturesque jokes, and made money by harmless misspelling.

His profession of auctioneer, when remembered by an audience, lent piquancy to that saying in one of his lectures that he had "never known an auctioneer to tell a lie, unless it was perfectly convenient." His writings brought him a fortune at last, and he had the pleasure of seeing himself selected for praise in the very serious *Westminster Review*.

Mark Twain is so much with us still (though never too much) that his work is hardly ready yet for a purely retrospective attention. May it be only at a Methuselah's life date of the "Innocent," when it can be so treated. We all remember how demurely he came on the lecture stage, and then introduced himself—but he needs just as little introduction here.

In the varied roll of humorists and fun-makers it seems an omission to leave Lowell and Holmes out. If their serious work had been very much less, instead of dominating the public mind in its remembrance of them, a notice of them here would be compulsory. In Lowell's case, in spite of a publicist's career, too, it may be said that his "Fable for Critics" and his "Bigelow Papers" gave him his first claim to high renown, and there are some critics who, without underestimating his versatile celebrity, maintain that these works still measure up to his high-water line.

John G. Saxe's humor, however, was not eclipsed in this way by a large body of serious work, for he was more of a humorist than he was anything else. His verses reflected scintillations of the most coruscating kind, and recalled the fertile genius of Thomas Hood. Of newspaper notoriety he had no end—but who has seen within twenty years a poem of his afloat in the American press? Why his poetry does not appeal to us to-day there is nothing apparent in it to show—and yet the fact

must be recorded that it has faded away, and the present generation of readers knows it not. But his "Proud Miss McBride," the "Rhyme of the Rail," and "The Cold Water Man" are of the brightest vintage, while all that he wrote was starred with merry quips and turns, the keenest puns outcropping everywhere. I quote here, not so much for its representativeness, as for its brevity, his

"SONNET TO A CLAM

"Dum tacent *clamant*.

"Inglorious friend! most confident I am
Thy life is one of very little ease;
Albeit men mock thee with their similes
And prate of being as happy as a clam!
What though thy shell protects thy fragile head
From the sharp bailiffs of the briny sea?
Thy valves are, sure, no safety valves to thee,
While rakes are free to desecrate thy bed,
And bear thee off,—as foemen take their spoil,—
Far from their friends and family to roam;
Forced like a Hessian from thy native home
To meet destruction in a foreign broil!
Though thou art tender, yet thy humble bard
Declares, O clam, thy case is shocking hard!"

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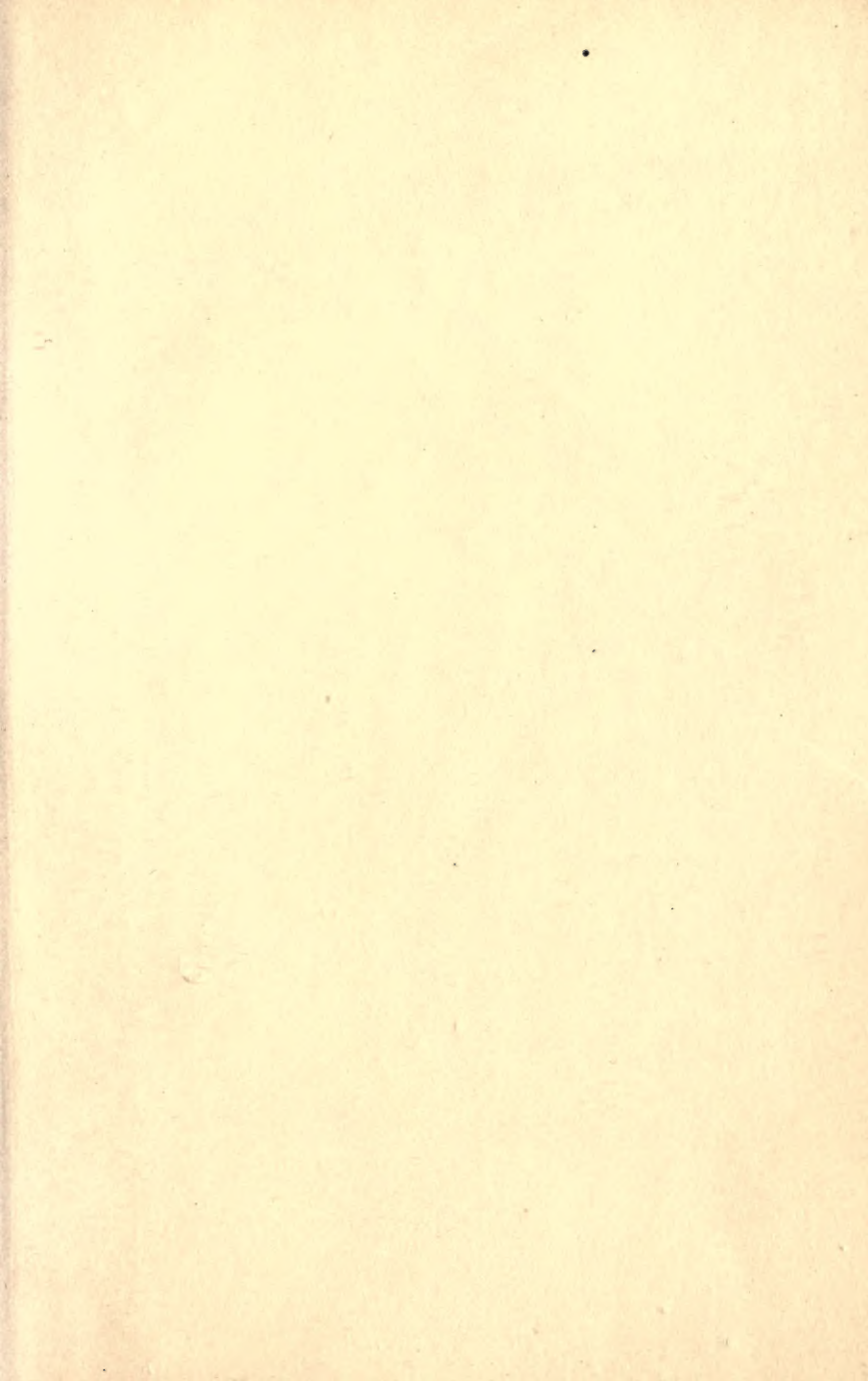
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